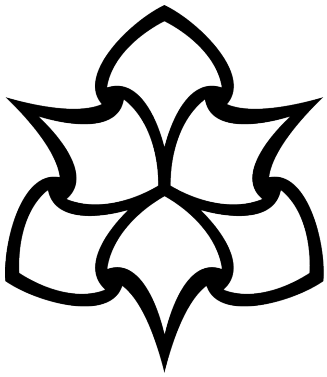

Art Collectives in Contemporary Israel

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Abstract

This research examines art collectives working in Israel within the last decade. This research is currently the only in-depth study dedicated to contemporary socially engaged and collaborative art practices in Israel from the perspective of art research and political studies. It contributes to both disciplines by i) developing an interdisciplinary framework from which to analyse socially engaged and collaborative art; and ii) providing an alternative reading of contemporary Israeli art from a politically-oriented position.

The motivation for conducting this research comes from the proliferation of collaborative art practices in Israel in the last decade, and especially after the 2011 Israeli protest for social justice. Within this research context I ask What is the socio-political context that has prompted the recent 'social turn' in Israeli art; and how artists use collaborative and socially engaged practices to initiate change within the political as well as the artistic field.

To answer these questions, I adopt an interdisciplinary approach which relies on Jacques Rancière's aesthetic regime theory and Félix Guattari's notion of transversality. Guattari and Rancière emphasize the involvement of art with other terrains and develop an aesthetic reading on non-artistic phenomena. To examine the meanings and impacts of such involvement, I use other key concepts and models such as Gills Deleuze and Guattari's notion of affect, Chantal Mouffe's model of radical democracy, Sara Ahmed's model of sociality of emotions, and Étienne Balibar's concept of the right of residency. This theoretical toolbox enables me to closely examine the limitations and

possibilities of using art as a tool to imagine more inclusive and plural ways of living together.

Table of Contents

List of Figures:

1. Introduction: The J14 Movement and The ‘Social Turn’ in Israeli Art

> On the last night of the protest, after “the March of the Million”, we sat a bunch of people on the rooftop of the abandoned building on 47 King George St. [in Jerusalem] … overlooking Paris Square crowded with protestors and having the talk – our protest, where is it going? As intellectuals and artists who have recently graduated from academia we felt unsatisfied. The protest has signified for us the beginning of a conscious change. Does the end of the protest mean giving up the chasing after this change? What is our place in life after the protest? With feelings of urgency, necessity and responsibility needing a home, we found that place for us and for many people (Empty House, 2011).

This text was written by the art collective Empty House (Bayit Reik in Hebrew) following the launch of their first project on October 2011. Empty House is one of several art collectives that have emerged in Israel in the last decade. This collective was specifically formed during the last mass demonstration, aka ‘the March of the Million’, of the 2011 Israeli protests for social justice (which in this thesis is also referred to as the J14 Movement). Beginning on July 14, 2011 in Tel Aviv, as a protest camp against the housing shortage and the high cost of living, it soon turned into the biggest and most organised struggle against the effects of neo-liberal agendas implemented in the previous three decades in Israel. These agendas were perceived to have led to the deterioration of the Israeli welfare state model (Adva Centre, 2016). This struggle is already recognised in the Israeli-Jewish collective memory as a moment of empowerment. Scholars who have researched the J14 Movement agree that it was an unprecedented moment in terms of the high number of protestors, the shifting of the governmental agenda towards

issues that are considered social,[1] and the general support the protest received (86% of the public according to polls), as well as in terms of media coverage – both mainstream and alternative media placed the protest as the main headline news of that summer (Filc and Ram, 2013; Levy, 2017; Livio and Katriel, 2014; Monterescu and Shaindlinger, 2013). While existing research on the J14 Movement has studied the articulation of a new civic discourse, its limitations and its effects on Israeli politics, there is less attention on the aesthetic elements of the protest and its connection to a new phenomenon of socially engaged and collaborative art practices in Israel.[2]

In this thesis, I refer to this phenomenon as the 'social turn' within Israeli art. According to Claire Bishop (2012: 3) a 'social turn' is the attempt to think of art collectively and see this attempt as "synonymous with political upheaval and moment for social change". One of the premises of this thesis is the tactical and aesthetic similarities between the work of art collectives and socially engaged artists and the protest of the J14 Movement. For example, they have both chosen the public arena as a site for political and artistic action, engaged with people from marginalised communities, and developed alternative platforms from which to implement values of solidarity, commonality and creativity within an everyday context. To understand the

[1] Most of the mass demonstrations throughout Israeli history dealt with what are considered as political issues within Israeli discourse, such as peace and security. Living under a governmental policy of a constant state of emergency made other issues, such as socio-economic gaps, education, welfare and health services a minor priority (Ben Eliezer, 2004).

[2] Two examples of research that do focus on the production of a new aesthetics is Livio and Katrial (2014) who research the visual and semiotics language of banners and performances within the mainstream encampment on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv; and Belkind (2013) who analyses the soundtracks created during the protests. I also contributed to this discussion by comparing the aesthetic language of the mainstream encampment to the alternative protest camp in Levinsky Garden in south Tel Aviv (Cohen, 2018).

growing emergence of socially engaged and collaborative art practices within the last decade and their relations to movements for social change, this thesis asks: i) What is the socio-political context that has prompted the recent 'social turn' in Israeli art? and ii) How do artists use collaborative and socially engaged practices to initiate change within the political as well as the artistic field?. I examine these thesis questions by looking at four art collectives that have been active in Israel since 2009 and their working methods fit to the ones mentioned above: Muslala, Arteam, Empty House and Onya. This thesis adopts an interdisciplinary framework to analyse the collectives' work in relation to i) the Israeli socio-political context which is here referred to as a national-neo-liberal order (Avigur-Eshel and Filc, 2017: 2, 11); ii) Israeli art historiography that tends to neutralise and/or ignore the political and critical aspects of artworks (Azoulay, 1992; Khinski, 2006); and iii) socially engaged art theories that have gained dominance within art research in the last two decades (Bishop 2006, 2012; Bradley and Esche, 2007; Jackson, 2011; Kester 2004, 2011; McKee, 2016; Thompson, 2012; Raunig, 2007; Sholette, 2010; 2017).[3]

By doing this, this thesis on art collectives in contemporary Israel contributes to research in three main ways. It conducts an in-depth study on

[3] There are writings on the various forms of socially engaged art prior to the 2000s. These includes Felshin's (1995) edited anthology, *But is it Art?: The Spirit of Art as Activism* on the relationship between art and activism; Sholette's (1999) essay "News from Nowhere: Activist Art and After, a Report from New York City" that outlines activist art relationship with the art institutions; Lacy (1995) edited anthology, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* that conceptualise a new form of public art based on direct engagement with the audience; and Miles's book *Art, Space and The City: Public Art and Urban Futures* (1997) on the relation between public art and urban development. However, in relation to the abundance of the texts and exhibitions on socially engaged art written after the 2000s, and the development of courses around socially engaged art practice and theory, it can be argued that the writing on this genre during the 1990s was more scattered and took a more marginal position within art research.

contemporary socially engaged and collaborative art practices in Israel that has yet to taken place. With the exception of Arteam, which consists of established artists, most of the art collectives' members started their work in the collectives as recent graduates or while still studying in university. The core members of the art collectives, especially in the Muslala and Empty House collectives, have mostly not taken part in institutionalised art spaces, for example by showing their work in museums and galleries. In fact, the work in the art collective has become their main artistic project. Quite often their presence in other artistic or public platforms, such as conferences, panels or interviews, relates to their involvement in the art collectives. Despite working on the margins of the Israeli art field, the work of the art collective is familiar to most "members" of Israeli's small art community. This is evident from numerous interviews and articles about the art collectives published in mainstream media, and Israeli art and design blogs and magazines, as well as the collective members' participation on different art panels, and conversations in both mainstream and alternative art spaces and institutions.[4] However, there is a relative lack of research on the artistic phenomenon of socially engaged and collaborative art practices. I write this observation while acknowledging the contributions to this field of research that has come from different academic areas. For example, a study on the

[4] Many of the sources I use here are taken from articles on the art collectives published in various platforms, and I will refer to them throughout this research. Other examples for the art collectives involvement in more conventional art constellations can be seen in the participation of a Empty House members in a penal organised by Israel Museum in Jerusalem called called "Protest and Art" during summer 2017; or in academic conference that took place in Tel Aviv university in spring 2017 called "New Directions in the History of Israeli Art". Other cases in where projects of Muslala collectives were part of bigger art programmes, such as the annual Manofim – Jerusalem Contemporary Art Festival, a collaboration between major art institutions, the municipal cultural department and smaller, non-profit and/or independent galleries and groups.

performative elements of Empty House works by theatre scholar Daphna Ben-Shaul (2016); the Muslala collective relations with the residents of Musrara neighbourhood, where the collective used to work, by sociologist Meirav Aharon-Gutman (2016; 2018); and a study on squatting in Israeli cities by art collectives such as Empty House, by geographers Ruth Abraham and Gillad Rosen (2018). Interestingly, the first empirical and theoretical foundations for socially engaged and collaborative art practices within an academic context were laid by interdisciplinary programmes, such as theatre and performance studies, and Urban Studies. By primarily looking at the art collectives from the position of an art researcher, I am interested in situating socially engaged and collaborative practices within a contemporary art discourse and thus lessen this research gap. By focusing on four art collectives I will look at artistic matters, such as the relations between the artistic process and the art object, the unique fingerprint of the singular artist and the collaborative artwork; and the question of autonomy of artistic spaces produced outside conventional art institutions.

By looking at new cases of socially engaged and collaborative art practices, this thesis expands on the existing Western-oriented research on socially engaged and collaborative art practices. Major studies on socially engaged art such as the ones cited above, focus on case studies initiated by artists from Western Europe and Northern America. In addition, the dominant theoretical frameworks for understanding socially engaged and collaborative art practices are derived from Western art history, especially the legacy of avant-garde art and the modern debate regarding artistic autonomy (Bishop,

2012; Bourriaud, 2002; Kester 2011).[5] Non-western art collectives, including the art collectives discussed in this thesis, are familiar with Western art history and are influenced by global artistic trends. Yet they are also motivated by local historical and political events and respond to the localised art scene. Both aspects should be taken into consideration when analysing and contextualising non-Western art. For this reason, this thesis combines theories developed by western thinkers, especially Jacques Rancière and Félix Guattari, that are discussed in this chapter, with empirical and theoretical research on Israel's geopolitical and cultural conditions, and knowledge produced by activists and local grassroots work. I will elaborate on the methodology in the following paragraphs. Here I will note that the purpose of combining such methods is to develop a theoretical model that suggests connections between time, space, body and action that go beyond binary division of West/East and centre/periphery, and is more relevant to examine the circulation and translation of ideas and practices within a globalised and transnational era.

The last contribution is to Israeli critical art discourse, by developing an alternative framework from which to understand the relations between art and politics in Israel. As the product of early 20th century European

[5] The scholars mentioned in the texts draw different conclusions regarding social practices, an umbrella term to cover the range of participatory (Bishop, 2012), relational (Bourriaud, 2002), and dialogical (Kester 2004; 2011) art. For comparative studies on their main area of disagreements see: Bell, 2017; Jackson, 2008 and Tunali, 2017. Nonetheless, when it comes to the main theoretical framework to which they respond, all of them return to the legacy of historical avant-garde and identify similar influential art movements, such as Dada, Futurism and the Situationist International. Although using different examples and noting the artistic changes between historical avant-garde and today's social art practices they argue that contemporary social practices has taken upon themselves the avant-garde task of provoking the viewers or participators' point of view, and exposing them to unfamiliar experiences and encounters.

Modernism, Israeli art historiography has tended to adopt a formalistic approach to interpreting art. Social and political events were often described in major art publications as a background story to which artists respond through studio-based artworks. This approach has been critiqued in Israel since the early 1990s, mostly through publications and exhibitions which deconstruct the Israeli art canon from post-structuralist, feminist and post-colonial theoretical lenses (Azoulay, 1999; Dekel, 2016; Khinski, 2015), as well as research and curatorial works which focus on marginal artistic voices, such as Palestinians, non-Western Jews, and religious artists (Alon and Keshet, 2013; Ankori, 2006; Pedaya, 2014; Sperber, 2010). I argue however, that despite the centrality of critical discourses in Israeli art nowadays, there is still a wide consensus regarding some of the axioms and premises that constitute the Israeli art canon (Ofrat, 2014). Alternative narratives or marginal artists are often discussed as a means to contemplate the artistic canon rather than to challenge its validation and assumptions. By focusing on socially engaged and collaborative art practices, I examine how the expansion of art spaces outside of the established art institutions, draws new connections with other fields of thought and practices, such as the political, the educational and the ecological.

This introduction outlines the thesis structure, methodology and theoretical framework. As mentioned in the above paragraphs, this thesis combines both qualitative methods, such as interviews, participation and observation, alongside a desk-based research and textual analysis. The date collected on on the art collective was obtained via fieldwork, including the use of semi-

structured interviews and site visits, and online research, through the art collectives' websites, social media pages, and academic and artistic newsletters. The main reason for these methods in this thesis is the current lack of research on contemporary art collectives in Israel. However, this thesis is not an empirical research covering all the art collectives working in Israel in the last decade. Instead, the purpose of collecting primarily data is to offer a comprehensive and in-depth study on four art collectives that I argue to be central for understanding the recent 'social turn' in Israel art. In contrast to other socially engaged and collaborative art practices emerging in Israel within the last decade, the art collectives chosen for this study have developed a long-term infrastructure for artistic and communal activities outside the mainstream art, political and municipal institutions. For this reason, analysing their works would contribute to the aims of the research which are developing new ways of understanding the intersections between art, politics and social change in Israel.

The following two sections provide background on Jerusalem and south Tel Aviv, the areas in which the art collective mainly work and reside, and general information on the art collectives analysed here. This chapter then introduces the theoretical framework used to analyse the art collectives and more broadly the intersection of art, politics and change. By taking an interdisciplinary approach, this framework relies on Félix Guattari's (1995) aesthetic paradigm and the notion of transversality, as well as Jacques Rancière's (2002) theory of the aesthetic regime. Both Guattari and Rancière emphasise the involvement of art with other terrains, such as the political and

the ecological, and develop an aesthetic reading of non-artistic phenomenons. The concept of transversality is crucial to the theoretical approach deployed here and is understood as diagonal lines that oppose both vertical structures (as in hierarchies) and horizontal (as in organisational models of multiple centres), cutting between disciplines and other frameworks, such as gender, race, class and nationality (Genosko, 2009; Guattari, 1995; Raunig, 2002, 2007; Palmer and Panayotov, 2016). I use transversality here in two ways. The first is as a quality which can be found in the work of the art collectives. I argue that the art collectives suggest alternative ways of making art and thinking of politics, which the received histories of Israeli art have not been able to capture. The second use of transversality is as a model from which to configure new relations between time, spaces, and actions, that offer an alternative to chronological or thematic models of art research. To make the theoretical discussion specific to the socio-political context to which the art collectives respond, I use other theories and models revolving around issues of identity, narrative, community, nationality and borders. This include Deleuze and Guattari (1987) affect theory, Sara Ahmed's (2004) model of sociality of emotions, Chantal Mouffe's (2000; 2005) model of radical democracy, and Étienne Balibar's (2004) concept of the right of residency. These theories and models are sketched in the relevant sections, and discussed and contextualised in the following chapters. Overall, this theoretical toolbox will enable me to examine closely the limitations and possibilities of the art collectives to challenge the modes of representation within Israeli political and artistic

discourse, and to create new inclusive and plural forms of living together. Last, this chapter gives a brief description of the thesis chapters.

1.1 Jerusalem and South Tel Aviv as Sites of Alternative Art

The general profile of the art collectives analysed in this thesis is of Israeli-Jews in their early-mid career, young-mid adults, most of them Ashkenazi and secular men, who graduated from higher education institutions, mostly from art academies, who live and work either in Jerusalem or south Tel Aviv. For these reasons, this thesis is limited to Israeli-Jewish art discourse despite the intentions to critically examine it. There are moments of boundary crossing through a multi-national collaboration, for example in a Muslala public art work that includes works of Palestinian artists, or in Arteam's multilingual library that provides a space for creativity and self-expression for the migrant workers and asylum seekers. However, it does not focus on socially engaged and collaborative art made by Palestinian artists, or other forms of visual activism and/or activist art that are tied to social movements or activist groups.

This thesis is also limited to two cities, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, due to the central position both cities have within Israeli art and politics. While Jerusalem has the controversial role of the official capital of Israel, Tel Aviv is considered to be the financial and cultural centre of Israel (Alfasi and Fenster, 2005; Ram, 2007). By focusing on the two big cultural and political centres, I overlook, for example art and cultural initiatives in Haifa – the third largest city in Israel – that suggest a more collaborative and inclusive model

between the Israeli and the Palestinian population living there (Amir and Eidelman, 2013; Karkabi, 2018; Sela, 2013). I also overlook the place of the peripheral north and south in Israel in producing art, and the music scene that can be characterised as a working-class, Mizrahi, and traditional sub-culture (Aharon-Gutman, Mozes and Yavo Ayalon, 2019; Shem-Tov, 2019). These locations have great importance in the overall mapping of alternative and independent art practices in Israel. But through focusing on Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, I offer a different perspective from which to look at art practices and locations that are relatively ignored in the major historical accounts on Israeli art. Moreover, I suggest an interdisciplinary approach that considers, alongside the art history of both cities, the national and municipal politics that shape the production of art practices outside of the cities' art institutions. Here I briefly outline the political, municipal and artistic conditions that characterise Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, with emphasis on the area of south Tel Aviv, which I later develop in the relevant chapters.

According to Israeli art historiography, the official date of birth of Israeli art was 1906, when the Bezalel School of Art and Crafts (know today as Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design) was opened in Jerusalem (Barzel, 1987; Manor, 2005[a]; Shapira, 2008; Sperber, 2011; Tammuz, 1980; Zalmona, 2013). This school was established and managed by the Lithuanian-Jewish artist Boris Schatz, a member of the Zionist movement, who emphasised the role of art and crafts within the context of nation-building (Zalmona, 2013). On an artistic level, the school was considered to be traditional in its teaching methods. The work was focused around Jewish ceremonial art (Judaica) and

souvenirs from the land of Israel (Eretz Israel in Hebrew). Within the art department, the emphasis was on biblical and symbolic scenes (Manor, 2001). Despite the historical significance of Bezalel school, some art historians argue that it was actually ‘the Modernists”, that is, art students who went against Bezalel academic art methods and moved to the newly founded city of Tel Aviv during the 1920s, that laid the foundations of Israeli art (Manor, 2005[a]). ‘The Modernists’ whom I mention again in the next chapter, were less interested in Jewish themes and tradition and more with the latest artistic trends imported mostly from modern French art. Moving to Tel Aviv after studying in Bezalel school (something that still characterises Israeli-Jewish students today) expressed this artistic shift given Tel Aviv's political and cultural status (Ibid). This settlement, considered to be the first Hebrew city, became the urban flagship of the Zionist project. Since its foundation in 1909, Tel Aviv has represented the values of progress and modernism, but also of a new Hebrew-speaking and secular Jewish culture, with an economic model that was separate from the local native population (Rotbard, 2015). As a result, Tel Aviv stood in contrast to Jerusalem. Jerusalem, despite its religious and historical significance to the Jewish people, was not considered an attractive destination for new Jewish immigrants. It was a poor city with a large number of non-Jewish residents, with only a small Jewish population that was mostly religious (Zalmona, 2013).

This division of characteristics between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv grew deeper with the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948. On the one hand, it is

derived from actual statistics about the cities' demography and political affiliation. Jerusalem is roughly divided socially and spatially into three major sectors: secular Jews, religious Jews, and Palestinian-Arabs (Alfasi and Fenster, 2005). Compared to Israel as a whole, the poverty rates are relatively high with 46% of residents, mostly Palestinian Arabs (75%) and Ultra-Orthodox Jews (49%), living below the poverty line (Choshen and Korach, 2018). During elections, the right-wing coalition, which includes the secular-national, religious-national, and ultra-orthodox parties, tends to get the highest votes in Jerusalem (Ram, 2007).[6] In Tel Aviv-Jaffa however, the vast majority (90%) are Israeli-Jews and most of them are secular, with small households (Tel Aviv Municipality, 2016). According to 2019 election data, the Tel Aviv voting pattern is centre-left.[7] There is a small Palestinian-Arab minority in Tel Aviv-Jaffa, which consists of 9.6% of the population, most of them living in Jaffa (Ibid). There are no official numbers on work migrants and asylum seekers living in Tel Aviv-Jaffa, but their number is estimated at 35,000 (less than 1% of Tel Aviv Jaffa population; Marom and Yacobi, 2013). On the other hand, these characteristics have contributed to the shaping of a fixed and generalising image for each city. Moreover, the secular and Western-oriented image of Tel Aviv is based on the historical separation between what today is north and central Tel Aviv, and the southern neighbourhoods of Tel Aviv and the city of Jaffa, which are more diverse in

[6] It is important to note that most Palestinians living in East Jerusalem hold a permit residence and therefore are not eligible to vote. I will discuss further the status of East Jerusalem in the next chapter.

[7] Based on the election map produced by Madlan and Ynet newspaper during the April 2019 elections in Israel. [online]. Available at: <https://z.ynet.co.il/short/content/ElectionMap2019/?externalurl=true> [accessed 1 October 2019] [In Hebrew].

their ethnicity and religions, and generally come from working class backgrounds (Rotbard, 2015).

The second reason to consider Jerusalem and south Tel Aviv when researching the relations between art and politics in Israel, is the way they encapsulate the challenges that Israeli society faces nowadays. Jerusalem and south Tel Aviv are amongst the most diverse areas in Israel in terms of nationality, ethnicity and religion (Alfasi and Fenster, 2005; Keidar, 2018; Schnell and Harpaz, 2005). However, this so-called diversity is often expressed through antagonistic and divisive means. In Neve Sha'anan, the ongoing neglect by the authorities, and the environmental damage caused by the new CBS, increases the local residents' feelings of distress and neglect. Moreover, Neve Sha'anan has become a centre for non-Jewish residents, over-populated with work migrants and asylum seekers who are perceived as 'infiltrators' within the Israeli law. These demographic changes have increased the social and ethnic tensions in the area (Hatuka, 2010).[8] In Jerusalem, the city's religious significance for the three monotheist religions, and its controversial status as the official capital of Israel, often lead to violent clashes between Israelis and Palestinians, Ultra-Orthodox anti-Zionist Jews and secular and religious Zionist Jews (Alfasi and Fenster, 2005; Keidar, 2018). These tensions have also contributed to the shape of the urban space, for example, by drawing unofficial borders between Jewish secular neighbourhoods in western Jerusalem, Palestinian neighbourhoods

[8] 'Infiltrators' is the legal term in Israel to define people who illegally enter Israeli territories. Within the current law the term is mostly used to describe work migrants who do not possess valid working visas, and asylum seekers who entered Israel via the Israeli-Egyptian border (Administration of Border Crossing, Population and Immigration, 2018: 9). I further explore the issue of asylum seekers in Israel in the second chapter.

in the east and Ultra-Orthodox Jewish neighbourhoods in the north of Jerusalem (Hasson, 2001). The in-between areas have often become sites of conflict over territory and ownership. Musrara neighbourhood (which is discussed in the second and third chapters) is one example of these in-between areas, where constant demographic changes influence its socio-political fabric (Aharon-Gutman, 2018). The private sector also has a role in the shaping of Israeli space and includes philanthropic funds and real-estate developers who invest in under-developed areas, such as Neve Sha'anan, or places with historical and cultural appeal for affluent Jews living abroad, such as Jerusalem and Jaffa. The national and the neo-liberal interests are often intertwined, as they not only aim at increasing the economic growth of these areas, but also to maintain a Jewish and Zionist majority (Hercbergs and Noy, 2015; Pnini-Yanovsky 2016).

By looking at the type of socially engaged and collaborative art practices created in Jerusalem and south Tel Aviv, I draw new connections between these two areas and identify them as sites of art margins. I ask how art produced in these sites can challenge the cultural hegemony associated with central Tel Aviv, but also the homogenisation of space under the current national-neo-liberal political order. As I show throughout this thesis, the material and socio-economic conditions of these areas have produced a different type of artistic activity that reconfigures binary relations between centre-margins, and mainstream-alternative, and define new senses of locality that are based on the multiplicity of traditions, languages and histories that shape these sites. This is not something that is unique to the

last decade of the social turn in Israeli art, but rather can be found in different times and within other cultural and political contexts. They include, for example, counter-theatre and public art interventions in the 1970s in Jerusalem, the establishment of a Mizrahi-feminist art and cultural space in Neve Sha'anan in the the early 2000s, and the increased presence of Haredi woman artists within the Jerusalem contemporary art scene. As each of these examples go beyond this scope of this thesis, and deserves their own study, I only briefly mention them when their work intersects with my case studies.

1.2 The Art Collectives: Muslala, Arteam, Empty House and Onya

This section presents a short biography of each of the art collectives, including highlighted works and research questions each case raises. The latest decade of the social turn in Israeli art saw a proliferation of collaborative art initiatives in the form of public interventions, street art and community centres.[9] I focus on Muslala, Arteam, Empty House and Onya collective to discuss socially engaged and collaborative art projects in Israel for several reasons. First, is the socio-political context from which the art collectives have emerged. Muslala and Arteam were established in 2009,

[9] In addition to the art collectives discussed above one can look at Public Movement performative research group founded in 2006 that investigate forms of political rituals (such as marches) and create public choreographies in public spaces; HaMabul (the Great Flood in Hebrew) collective founded in 2009 in Jerusalem that have produced performative interventions and gatherings in public spaces as a means to encourage dialogue between people; the ongoing project *Through Language* (2006-2016) by Parrhesia group that consists of a visual Arabic-Hebrew dictionary sprayed in Jerusalem and Jaffa as a reaction to the erasure of Arabic road signs; Katamona group who in 2014 opened a gallery and library in the Katamonim neighbourhood in Jerusalem; and Forum 2014 based in Haifa that gathered activists and artists living in the city to suggest alternative urban plans that will benefit the residents.

Empty House in 2011 and Onya in 2014. Despite the differences in time and proximity to the J14 Movement, I argue that they are all symptomatic responses to the same national and neo-liberal order that has been established in Israel since the year 2000. As such, they shed light on the different potentialities and challenges of producing alternative and politically-oriented art projects sited within the current socio-political climate in Israel. Second, the art collectives share similar working methods, such as developing alternative art centres and creating interventions outside mainstream art institutions; they involve people who are not considered as trained and/or professional artists, and they expand artistic skills by including tasks such as construction, agriculture, and plumbing. They do, however, hold different positions regarding art's relations with politics, the meanings of artistic and political practices, and the artists' role in society. Moreover, the consecutive work of the art collectives since their time of emergence has led to the creation of a range of works, as well as self-reflective processes that provide richer insights into the different aspects of socially engaged and collaborative art practices, such as group dynamics, relations with local communities, and with municipalities. As some of these issues tend to repeat in the works of the art collectives I choose between one to three projects made by each collective as a way to analyse and compare these artistic matters to one another, to other socially engaged and collaborative art practices around the world, and to canonical Israeli art works that are not necessarily socially engaged and/or collaborative.

1.2.1 Muslala

This art collective was established in 2009 by artists who graduated from the art academy Bezalel, Jerusalem, and stayed in the city.[10] Many of them moved to the neighbourhood Musrara, located between the city centre and Jerusalem's Old City. Muslala was registered as a non-profit organisation (NPO) as a means to receive tax-deductible donations, support and resources from state officials, but also to be taken seriously by the different bodies the collective works with.[11] Musrara holds a unique beauty, and social and political history, that inspired the collective to work there. It was built as a Palestinian neighbourhood during the 19th century by wealthy Christian and Muslim Palestinians from the Old City who lived there until the 1948 war (Ahraon-Gutman, 2016). With the displacement of its original residents, the neighbourhood was then populated by Jewish immigrants from Arab and Muslim countries (usually referred to as Mizrahi Jews, the term I use from now on). Musrara was considered to be an under-developed neighbourhood until the 1980s. The harsh conditions under which the residents lived led to the emergence of the Mizrahi civil movement The Black Panthers that were active during the 1970s and will be discussed in the second and third chapters (Shalom Chetrit, 2004). Since the 1980s the neighbourhood has undergone several demographic changes, and today it is inhabited by Mizrahi Jews, Ultra Orthodox Jews (referred here by their Hebrew term,

[10] According to Muslala website, the collective today consists of the following members: Oron Elior, Eyal Levitt, Eldar Buzaglo, Ella Gill, Andrei Peshnicki, Guy Cohen, Dina Yogev, Danny Kinreich, Yossi Ode, Matan Israeli, Matan Pinkas, Nadav Oren, Nili Perlmutter, Natan Landau, Linda Natan, Eliza Ashkenazi, Ram Ozri, Shmulik Twig. In addition there is the executive committee (required by Israeli law for registered NGOs and NPOs): Eyal Bloch, Lydia Meltin. Nir Yogev. Naomi Tzur and Chen Amir.

[11] According to a conversation with one of the Muslala founders (13.07.2018).

Haredi Jews), middle-class Jewish families from a European background (referred to as Ashkenazi-Jews), as well as young students (Aharon-Gutman, 2016). Musrara also has several art and music institutions, which are mentioned again in the third chapter. The name of the art collective has two meanings. The first one is the combination of two words, Musrara and Maslul (a path or route in Hebrew), which refers to the type of public art created by Muslala around the neighbourhood, and the weekly art tours the art collective organised in its first years. The second meaning is more linguistic. According to Muslala members, the word Musrara has a negative sound as it consists of a double combination of the word ‘Ra’ (bad in Hebrew) (Muslala, 2018). Yet by replacing this combination with a more lyrical sound such as ‘lala’, Muslala refer to the types of small poetic changes they create in the neighbourhood which aim to transform it into a more pleasant and creative place. This interpretation of the word Musrara is actually the opposite of the original meaning of the word which means “abundant with grace” or “beauty” in Arabic. This small anecdote in relation to the Musrara neighbourhood and the Muslala collective expresses some of the complexities of socially engaged art practice, and the problematic position of art collectives from the ‘outside’ coming to less advantaged places to make ‘change’.

Muslala worked in the neighbourhood of Musrara for its first five years. During that time, the group used the diverse landscape and the history of the place to create public art, organise cultural events, develop a communal art centre, and conduct artistic tours. The art collective managed to establish relations with the representative body of the neighbourhood, the Musrara

Community Administration, and received from the city hall permission to use Musrara public shelter as a carpentry shop, studio and meeting place. In the second and third chapters, I will discuss the major projects Muslala created in the neighbourhood: *Between Green and Red – The Meeting Point* (2012, 2013) a multicultural festival celebrating the history of Musrara, and *The Black Panthers Road* (2011), the path of a public art project in Musrara dedicated to the legacy of the Black Panthers. By looking at these projects I will examine the configuration of new time-space relations that are created by producing works of art that responds to the material, historical and political conditions of the space of Musrara as well as absorbing their artistic references from marginal groups within Israeli art and political discourses. I also look at Muslala's attempts to produce new collaborations not just between themselves and the Jewish residents of Musrara, but also between the Jewish residents and the Palestinian residents living in the eastern part of Musrara. This attempt failed for several reasons which I explore in the second chapter, and eventually led to Muslala leaving the neighbourhood of Musrara.

For about two years, between 2014 and 2016, Muslala was in a transition period (Muslala, 2018). During this time, they produced public artworks around Jerusalem, launched their multicultural festival called, *The Meeting Point – Under the Bridge* (2015), in a different area, and relocated the carpentry workshop to Beita – a new art space opened in Jerusalem city centre by the municipal department for plastic arts in 2014. Nonetheless, the group struggled financially and the lack of a stable working space could have

impacted on the collective future artistic activities. This changed with the beginning of the latest and ongoing project *The Terrace* (2016-ongoing), a communal space for urban agriculture and sustainability in the unused roof space of the Clal shopping centre located in downtown Jerusalem. This project continues Muslala's artistic, communal and sustainable values, developed during their work in Musrara, redesignating an empty property for public use; adopting collaborative working methods between the collective members, volunteers and local residents; using recycled materials and producing no waste; and creating a multicultural space that reflects the diversity of Jerusalem (Muslala 2018). However, the political neutrality of Clal shopping centre, especially when compared to the neighbourhood of Musrara, has enabled a different type of social relations to take place. I discuss this project in relation to what is referred to here as processes of institutionalisation of the more ephemeral and political aspects of Muslala's previous work.

1.2.2 Arteam

Arteam was a group of artists, curators and designers that formed in 2008. As opposed to the other collectives discussed in the this, Arteam members were already established and well known professionals, with most of their time devoted to their own individual projects.[12] Similarly to Muslala, Arteam was registered as an NPO for financial and bureaucratic reasons. Arteam's initial plan was to open a multidisciplinary art centre that would accompany and support art in the public realm. This idea was later developed into *The*

[12] The group consisted of artist Hadas Ophrat, curator and art scholar Tali Tamir, artist Romy Achituv, architect Yoav Meiri and artist and author Marit Ben-Israel.

Garden Library, a multilingual library located in Levinsky Garden in the Neve Sha'anan neighbourhood in south Tel Aviv in 2009. *The Garden Library* is the first and only project collaboratively made by Arteam. The project's first aim is to provide a cultural and educational space for the asylum seekers and migrant workers in Israel. Choosing the Levinsky Garden as a site for the library derives from the concentrated population of foreign communities in the area of south Tel Aviv, and its proximity to Tel Aviv's New Central Bus Station (the new CBS) which transformed the Levinsky Garden into a meeting point during the weekends for foreign communities.

The Garden Library was built with the collaboration of representatives from the migrant communities, most of whom live around the area of south Tel Aviv, and the aid of Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) who provide legal and welfare support for asylum seekers in Israel. The library is diverse, both in contents and languages. It contains about 3500 books in more than sixteen languages. The catalogue system is unique and based on the readers' emotional response. As a result, the books changed their locations on the shelves based on the last reader's reaction. In addition to the library activity, Arteam organised other cultural and art events, such as picnics, music and dance festivals, story-time for kids, art and craft workshops, and screenings of films and sport competitions. In their artistic statement on the project, Arteam described *The Garden Library* as an artistic solution for a welfare problem, as well as taking civic responsibility for matters that are more properly addressed by the state.[13] The discussion on the, *The Garden*

[13] This statement was shown to me by Hadas Ophrat during an interview in his house, 30.07.18. It was written as a draft document during their working process on *The Garden Library*. Large segments from this statement reappeared later *The Garden Library's*

Library, focuses around two main issues: the possibility of practising a different form of citizenship that is not bound to a fixed ethno-national form of identification through, the use of the arts; and the relations between aesthetics and ethics.

After three to four years of operating *The Garden Library*, the management of the project has gradually passed to Mesila – Aid and Information Centre for the Foreign Communities, a department that is part of the Welfare Human Services Administration of the Southern Tel Aviv – Jaffa municipality.[14] The Mesila Centre has supported *The Garden Library* from the start by providing financial aid and making connections between Arteam and representatives of the foreign communities, so that the library was built in Levinsky Garden to suit their needs. In its first years, *The Garden Library*, operated only on weekends. However, as time passed and the necessity of a communal centre for the foreign communities grew bigger, especially in light of Israeli policy towards asylum seekers living in Israel which denied them access to basic rights such as healthcare, education and the right to work. Moreover, it had become difficult for the Arteam members to maintain *The Garden Library* on a weekly basis due to the members' individual work and life commitments. Once Mesila took over the management of *The Garden Library* the opening hours, the library's team and the activities were expanded. Arteam members are still considered founders and one of them, Hadas Ophrat was a board member until recently, but they no longer work together. The library has become a community centre for art and culture with a range of creative

flayers and brochures Arteam produced.

[14] An interview with Hadas Ophrat in his house, 30.07.18.

activities, such as after-school art and crafts workshops, theatre groups for youth and adults, a football club, a sustainable-fashion cooperative and an adult education centre offering affordable courses in photography, photo and video editing and documentation, computing and sewing. Moreover, many of *The Garden Library* members have become part of local activist groups struggling against the lack of a regulated asylum process in Israel, and also joining in solidarity shared struggles with the senior residents of Neve Sha'anan neighbourhood, mostly regarding the environmental and health damage caused by the new CBS. One of the relevant examples for these kinds of shared struggles between asylum seekers and senior residents was the Levinsky Garden Protest Camp, enacted during the 2011 Israeli protests for social justice and adjacent to *The Garden Library* (Misgav, 2015). In regards to the structural and management changes that occurred in *The Garden Library* and its relation to community activism, I discuss the notion of change as a reciprocal force between a socially engaged art project and the public space in which it is produced. In other words, I will not just ask how art can change the public space but also how the public space can change the art.

1.2.3 Empty House

Empty House is a collective of friends: artists, musicians and writers, who work and live in Jerusalem.[15] Many of them were still studying and were just graduating when the collective was formed. According to their text quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Empty House is the only collective analysed

[15] The original group consists of Elad Yaron, Shavit Yaron, Jonathan Ofrath, Neta Meisels and Itamar Hammerman.

here that has made a direct link between the the J14 Movement and their formation as an art collective. However, some of its members had already taken part in the alternative art and music scene in Jerusalem, for example, by organising poetry events and raves in abandoned spaces. Framing their collaborative projects using the J14 Movement was something that was done retrospectively, as a means to articulate their projects using the political terminology that was developed during the 2011 summer protests, and which has become familiar within public discourse.[16] By doing that, Empty House has continued the J14 Movement mostly on a conceptual level. All Empty House projects revolve around the search for home. However, as groups of artists, this notion of home is a cultural one, and was a reaction to the lack of art spaces in Jerusalem that are experimental and open-minded.

Empty House adopted a working method of identifying 'black holes' on the Jerusalem map – meaning, identifying all sorts of unused abandoned spaces – and invaded these 'black holes', cleaning and renovating them to transform them into alternative cultural spaces for a short period of time (Yaron, 2013). Amongst the sites that were squatted by Empty House were an abandoned hotel, a fibre factory (both of them were destroyed in favour of real estate projects) and an abandoned agricultural land. The working process was divided into several parts. First was conceptualising the project by the core Empty House group, and then releasing of an open call for other members to join. The second phase was preparing the space by cleaning it, connecting it to water and electricity, dividing it into units that usually included kitchen,

[16] According to an interview with one of Empty House members (2.2.2018).

toilets, reading area, bar and a music hall, and installing art works. The last phase was the opening of the space to the public for a period that lasted from a few days to a few weeks (Ibid). As Empty House refrain from receiving any financial support from the municipality or art institutions, opening the place to the public was a way to cover expenses by selling food and drinks.[17] After this period, Empty House left the space with the infrastructure they had created so that others could use it. In their working process, it is possible to identify some key elements concerning the expansion of artists' skills, redefinition of relations between individual and collaborative work, and the creation of a creative community in Jerusalem. I analyse these elements in the second chapter by focusing on their project *Kibbutz DIY* (2012), where the group invaded an abandoned field and constructed a model of a Kibbutz, a form of a Jewish settlement from the 20th century that is based on socialist and communal values. Choosing one of the most mythical symbols upon which Israeli-Zionist ideology was built, this case study will also be a way to discuss the changing values within Israeli society, and the meaning of re-enacting an almost non-existent form of living (most Kibbutzim in Israel were privatised) in the post-J14 Movement era.

Empty House had other projects that were different in structure or aims. One of them, *The Convoy* (2013), was a mobile cultural hall consisting of DIY vehicles that moved around Jerusalem for a period of two weeks. Their following project, *Wagon 322,* was their first commercial work. It was commissioned by the director of The First Station, a leisure and

[17] According to an interview with one of Empty House members (2.2.2018).

entertainment centre in German Colony in Jerusalem that was built on the former train station from the 19th century which connected Jerusalem and Jaffa. Empty House were invited to renovate and maintain for a short period of time one of the train coaches in the centre which dated to the British-Mandate period. This tension between the artistic autonomy that Empty House enjoyed while working independently, and its subjugation to contracts and formalities derived from its 'official' support, resulted in *The Wagon* being the last Empty House project for a period of two years. The long pause was also related to personal processes of growing up, looking for a 'real job' and supporting new families (Abraham and Rosen, 2018). Similarly to Muslala, during this time of uncertainty, Empty House members continued working on art and curatorial projects individually. Some of them were particularly working on finding ways in which the temporary cultural halls made by Empty House could be transformed into a more stable art centre for the creative community in Jerusalem (Ibid).

Empty House's next and on-going project, *The Factory* (2016-ongoing, HaMiffal in Hebrew), expresses this maturing process and the interest of many of the Empty House members of working on a more permanent space for the creative community in Jerusalem. The project was a result of a collaboration between Empty House and Eden company, a subsidiary of the Jerusalem Development Authority. Empty House signed a contract which gave them temporary permission to work in a historical building that was known as 'the Basket House' (Beit HaTene in Hebrew) located roughly between downtown Jerusalem and the Old City. *The Factory* is similar to

Empty House first projects in its working process. In an open call released around March 2016, Empty House invited new members to join the creation of a “cultural factory that will be a productive body, will suggest communal work spaces, will present and sell its product in the factory story” (Empty House, 2016: online). *The Factory* was opened to the public as an art centre during summer 2016. Since then the contract between Empty House and Eden company has been extended several times. This project is analysed as part of the discussion on institutionalisation. It situates the process between the current urban changes in Jerusalem and the attempts of groups, such as Empty House, to utilise these changes for the benefit of creative, inclusive and communal art spaces.

1.2.4 Onya

The Onya collective is the most recently formed collective discussed in this thesis. The original group consisted of graduate students from Bezalal Academy for Art and Design in Jerusalem. The students’ final projects expressed some of their interests in landscape interventions, place-making and sustainability, with one of them specifically focused on a plan to re-utilise the new CBS as a communal greenhouse in order to resolve the environmental damage caused by the station.[18] Following the students’ graduation at the end of 2013, these ideas gained concrete form as the

[18] Avigail Rubini, a visual communication graduate, made a video guide for making a terrace garden. Robert Unger, an architecture graduate, designed a plan for transforming the new Central Bus Station into a communal greenhouse (Bezalel 2013; Sivan, 2013). Both Rubini and Unger started the collective. Today, according to the collective’s website, its members include: Gill Cohen, Yoav Shafranek, Melanie Lidman, Shira Degani, Shmulik Twig (also a member of Muslala), Smadar Ariel, Yana Feedman, Carmel Yaari, Eyal Feder, Amir Elron, Nadav Douani, Shir Talor, Heela Harel and Dana Mor.

group emerged into a collective and started to recruit other members, mostly designers, architects, artists and social and community workers. During 2014, Onya collaborated with several cultural and art institutions in south Tel Aviv. They built a vegi-bench, a vertical garden made out of industrial waste in their temporary studio at Artport gallery in Tel Aviv. It was part of the works shown in the gallery's 'The Infiltrators' exhibition which examined the global and local state of asylum seekers. Another collaboration was with members of *The Garden Library*, mostly the children, where they cultivated plants on one of the concrete walls of the public shelter.

The most ambitious large-scale project of the Onya Collective was *Next Station* (2014). It was a series of art and landscape interventions around the station's complex. The project was the product of an open call sent by the Onya collective to Storefront for Art and Architecture gallery in New York for their online/offline project "World Wide Storefront" which explored experimental civic and cultural initiatives from around the world (World Wide Storefront: online). Once selected, Onya released an open call inviting proposals that investigated the new CBS's future. The emphasis of these proposals was on a commitment to issues of spatial and environmental justice, DIY techniques, sustainability, and participatory approaches (Onya, 2014). Onya received permission from the new CBS's management to operate within a designated route, as well as to use one of the empty spaces on the seventh floor as a studio. The round windows within this space gave it the feeling of a boat (Onya means boat in Hebrew) from which the collective

took its name.[19] After several months of work, *Next Station* was launched between October and November 2014. It consisted of more than thirty installations that were located around the new CBS. The success of the event brought many visitors to one of the most unpopular places in Tel Aviv, encouraging the new CBS director to give Onya the open space of one of the permanently closed entrances to the new CBS, in order to transform it into a a communal working and gardening space. This space, now called *The Ramp* (2014-ongoing) occasionally hosts cultural events and workshops.[20]

During this time Onya developed other landscape interventions in other locations. For example, they have worked in the Diamond Exchange District between Ramat Gan and Tel Aviv (2016) and in the industrial area of Jerusalem (2017), where they conducted fieldwork on the environmental conditions of the spaces, and offered temporary and permanent solutions for issues such as a lack of shaded and green space.[21] However, their main focus is around the area of south Tel Aviv and most specifically the new CBS. One of Onya's goals is to transform the space they received from the new CBS director into a multicultural community centre, similar to *The Garden Library*, but with more emphasis on urban agriculture and sustainability, much like Muslala's *The Terrace*. In contrast to Muslala and *The Garden Library,* whose long experience and concrete aims managed to transform their spaces into dynamic and lively communal centres, Onya is still struggling to define long term goals, especially their responsibility over their

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19 According to an interview with one of Onya members (17.07.2018).
20 Ibid.
21 Information of Onya's projects is accessable on the collective's website <http://onyacity.com/> [accessed 04.03.20]

space in the new CBS. Amongst the current difficulties Onya as a collective is facing are the different directions the members are interested in. For example, some are interested in artistic interventions and some in taking more communal roles. Other difficulties are the lack of senior residents to collaborate with any activity that validates the new CBS, as well as finding partners from the foreign communities whose unstable status in Israel makes it difficult from them to take part in such initiatives.[22] This current crossroads that the Onya collective is facing is discussed in the fourth chapter from two positions: multiculturalism in south Tel Aviv, and promoting sustainable approaches to urban planning. As these are issues that concern, for example, the ongoing work in *The Garden Library,* and of the Muslala collective, Onya provides another perspective from which to explore the implementation of artistic, social and sustainable visions in different environments, as well as the different positions artists take when it comes to filling the gaps in provision on issues both the public and the private sector refrain from.

1.3 Jacques Rancière's Aesthetic Regime

The aesthetic theory suggested by Rancière locates aesthetics as a general field of visibility, audibility and sensibility, from which our experience and perception of the world are derived, and also as a field of criticism and interpretation of art (Rancière, 2009: 11). Because of this, Rancière's theory has become a main anchor to discuss new directions within political and art research. The first one, is the 'aesthetic turn' in politics (Kompridis, 2014;

[22] According to an interview with one of Onya members (17.07.2018).

Ryan, 2019). The aesthetic turn is a response to the dissatisfaction with the conventional modes of political thought and research,[23] as well as the meaning of aesthetics which focus on art, taste and beauty. Aesthetics then is adopted as a terrain in which to explore phenomenons and concepts through non-cognitive methods (Kompridis, 2014). The second direction concerns what Rancière (2006) refers to as the politics of aesthetics. This does not simply indicate a study of different forms of political art, but rather making connections between aesthetics and politics through elements of visibility and representation that both the political and aesthetic fields hold in common. Looking at the politics of aesthetics one can ask how art constructs and reconstructs what we know, see, feel and believe. Rancière articulates new meanings for what he considers an act of politics and what constitutes as an 'aesthetic art' - i.e. art that provokes, contests, impacts, alters a certain view or understanding of the world (Tanke, 2011). By doing that, Rancière (2006) offers an alternative perception of art that undermines other art narratives, such as the autonomous modern perception of art. The vocabulary Rancière has developed to discuss these matters is used in this research for two purposes. First, to locate the case studies within a

[23] According to Nikolas Kompridis (2014: xvii), a large portion of political research is based on a Weberian/Habermasian approach towards modernity that splits ethics from politics, as well as science from art, transforming each into autonomous institutions. Aesthetics then becomes an aspect of culture (Kompridis, 2014: xvii). Another understanding of 'conventional modes of political thought' is the way in which during the 1960s-1980s political theory was "tied to a social scientific agenda and whose theoretical concerns were driven by debates on issues such as the decline of class, the rise of pluralism, [and] state legitimacy" (McNay, 2014: 2). The dissatisfaction with the conventional modes of political research also relates to the 'narrow' thematic focus. According to Holly Eva Ryan (2019: 128-129), who studies the relations between aesthetic theory and international relations, the last has tended to focus on war and diplomacy issue between nation-states. The 'aesthetic turn' becomes a theoretical approach from which to look at issues that were considered as 'secondary', such as emotion and representation, as well as the place of non-state actors in world politics.

framework that acknowledges the political dimension of their practices. Second, to provide an aesthetic reading on moments of political change in Israel.

1.3.1 Politics as Aesthetics

In this thesis, the term politics is not used to describe governmental relationships or the exercise of power by parties and politicians, nor is it used to mention issues that are identified as political within Israeli discourse (peace/security). It is instead understood as an act initiated by subjects – citizens and residents – who lack power, which constitutes a disturbance in the existing 'sensible order'. The 'sensible order' is a concept used by Rancière (2006: 12, 88-89) to refer to the way the world is divided into spaces, times, and modes of actions. This order is composed by the police through sets of laws, norms, and actions that determine what can be said, done, made, and thought within the limits of a specific order, as well as who gets to participate in it and how (Rancière, 2010: 36-37). Used in this way, the term police is not to be confused with the conventional understanding of the police as the institution or body in charge of enforcing the law of the state Rancière (2006: 89). The police is rather understood as the various mechanisms and processes that help to constitute a community – be it as a city, organisation, movement, or a state – and which determines its mode of inclusion (what is held in common) and exclusion (what is separated). Politics stands in contrast to the police, as politics is the intervention within the police order with the aim of changing the way the sensible is distributed (Rancière, 2006: 85, 89-90, 2010: 36-37). Politics as such becomes an

aesthetic matter, as it is a struggle over visibility and audibility (Tanke, 2011: 73).[24] Aesthetics is the framework in which questions of how the world is perceived and structured, how we give sense to the world, and how we can change the order of things are considered (Rancière, 2006). The last concern of aesthetics is achievable through processes of dissensus, which stands in contrast to the forms of consensus that constitute the police order. According to Rancière (2010: 38-39), dissensus occurs when the political interferes with the distribution of the sensible, articulated by the police, in order to achieve a new order of things. Dissensus "is not a conflict of interests opinions, or values", but "a division inserted in 'common sense'" (Ibid: 69). Aesthetics then becomes an act of contestation, questioning and challenging our modes of perception and knowledge. Dissensus, however, as part of the political, is a temporary act of intervention and cannot be a continuous state. It stands between the previous order of things and the new constitution of the common which the act of dissensus wishes to enact (Rancière, 2006: 83-84; Tanke, 2011: 73).

Rancière (2006: 14) argues that the aesthetic regime of politics "is strictly identical with the regime of democracy". Rancière does not refer to a specific political model of democracy, but rather defines the democratic as an act of disturbing the police order. Positing democracy in contrast to the police order, does not indicate a battle between democratic and repressive regimes, since according to Rancière every order which distributes the sensible is a police

[24] Rancière (2009: 20, 30; 2010: 173) relies on Kant's perception of aesthetics as an a-prior condition (aesthetic as space, alongside time) in which our experience is derived. Rancière however, differs from Kant in his perception of art which takes part in either affirming or disturbing the sensible order. According to Kant, art and an aesthetic experience in general lack any interest or function (Kompridis, 2014: 263).

order. However, there are better and worse forms of police order, and determining that depends on the extent to which a police order is open for certain acts of dissensus. Politics then is democratic in the sense that equality is the presupposition of any act of redistributing the sensible. According to Rancière's (2006: 83-86, 92; 2010: 5, 38, 69; see also Keucheya, 2010: 169) perception equality is not the goal (for example, fighting over human or civic rights), but a condition of politics that exposes the arbitrariness of any sensible reality, the contingent nature of the police order, and the way in which it identifies and classifies its subjects. The equal status of any sensible order is thus exposed by the political act initiated by those who lack power – meaning, those that do not have a say in the distribution of the sensible. This act is also concerned with the democratic aspect of politics as it involves the emancipation of those who initiated it – meaning, the ability for social transformation (Rancière, 2006: 83-84, 89-90; 2010: 31-32). During this emancipatory act of politics, those who initiate it are transformed or subjectified into political subjects. Similar to the regime of politics, the transformation into political subject is temporary, understood as an empty operator which is only activated once those who have a limited part in the sensible order or no part at all, act to redistribute it (Ibid). Political subjects exist only during times of dissensus which allows them to separate themselves from the police order and challenge "dominant categories of identification and classification" (Rancière, 2006: 97). As such, political subjects "forever remain precarious figures that hesitate at the borders of silence maintained by the police" (Rancière, 2006: 60).

To make Rancière's ideas about politics more specific to the political context of this research, it is relevant to ask what are the features of the current police order and who upholds the police order in Israel? As mentioned, the current police order in Israel can be understood as a national-neo-liberal one (Avigur-Eshel and Filc, 2017). This identification explains both processes of globalisation with the increasing privatisation of the Israeli economy, and the adaptation of a market economy, as well as processes of de-globalisation with the deepening of the national and religious conflicts (Ibid). The establishment of this order is explained by scholars of Israeli society as a result of a chain of events starting with the first Palestinian Intifada (uprising in Arabic, aka 'Al-Aksa Intifada') against the Israeli occupation between 1987-1993; the Oslo peace accord signed in 1993 between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO); the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995; and the outbreak of the second Palestinian Intifada in 2000, which ended at 2005. The second Intifada had a significant impact on current nationalist and military rhetoric and policy.[25] Within the last decade there has been a consecutive right-wing government under the

[25] During the second Intifada, the Israeli government's policy in relation to Palestinian civilians living in the Occupied Territories (the West Bank and Gaza) was based on military strategies such as, military incursions, curfews, roadblocks and destruction of public institutions and infrastructure during targeted killings and collective punishments (Dardashti 2013: 25). These actions affected the geographic and economic mobility of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza, and increased the discriminatory laws against Israeli-Palestinians many of whom expressed solidarity with the Palestinian struggle against the occupation (Dardashti 2013; DeMalach, 2009). The Israeli-Jewish space has also become a site of violence with waves of suicide bombings in public spheres in Israel. As a reaction to the second Intifada, the Israeli government under the leadership of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon (the national-liberal Likud party and later the centrist-liberal Kadima party) took several actions to secure and expand territories under Israeli control, such as the increased investment in public housing in the West Bank Jewish settlements, the building of the Separation Wall between Israel and the West Bank (since 2002), the disengagement from Gaza in 2005 which later led to the Israeli economic siege on Gaza since 2007 (Avigar-Eshel and Filc, 2017; Dardashti, 2012)

leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from the national-liberal Likud party (Knesset [a]). Despite high levels of distrust in the parliamentary and judiciary systems in Israel, the right-wing government is supported by the majority of Israeli-Jewish voters.[26] Moreover, local and regional events such as Second Intifada, the Second Lebanon War (2006) and the Second Gulf War (2003-2011) have impacted the Israeli economy. As a means of stabilising it, the Israeli government implemented two neo-liberal economic projects: in 2002 the Emergency Economic Program, and 2003, Israel's Economic Recovery Program (Avigar-Eshel and Filc, 2017; Ben-Porat, 2008). These actions continued former economic tendencies developed since the late 1970s, where Israel moved for the first time from a national-socialist state (under the Labour party, then called Mapai) to a national-liberal state (under the Likud party) (Filc, 2006). This transition is followed by a series of events, such as the civil struggle of the Israeli Black Panthers who emerged in 1971, the outbreak of the Yom Kippur war in 1973, the formation of the Block of the Faithful (Gush Emunim in Hebrew) in 1974 who advocate and act for Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, and the beginning of an economic crisis which reached its peak in 1984, with 450% inflation and external debt, which threatened the Israeli state with insolvency (Adva Centre, 2016; Haoketz, 2011).

These transformations which occurred within the police order in Israel, especially around the 1970s and the 2000s, were often followed with acts

[26] According to the 2018 Israeli Democracy Index (Anabi et al., 2018: online), the majority of the Israeli public (52%) identified as right-wing, 22% as centre and 20.5% as left-wing. There are high rates of distrusts in the government amongst both right-wingers (50%) and left-wingers (66%).

and moments of dissensus that have disrupted the distribution of the sensible under the given police order. By focusing on the J14 Movement as a recent and significant moment of dissensus within Israeli-Jewish society, I ask how political subjects are formed in Israel, what type of sensory reality is produced through their act of dissensus, and what are the possibilities and limitations of reconfiguring new modes of identification and representation. The type of politics that was developed during the mass protests especially around the mainstream encampment on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv, and the ways it directly affected the political regime in Israel, were critiqued by scholars as being limited in their ability to fundamentally challenge the national-neo-liberal order (Filc and Ram, 2013; Livio and Katriel, 2014; Shenhav, 2013). These are arguments that are further discussed in the fourth chapter when I examine the processes of institutionalism of both political movements and alternative artistic practices. Yet, alongside this critique, I also argue that the J14 Movement defined a dissensual moment for the socio-political order in Israel that has produced new sensory realities in which to redistribute the sensible, especially when considering the alternative protest camps that were erected in other areas in Israel (also discussed in the fourth chapter). Using Rancière (2006: 83-84) words, J14 has constituted an unprecedented number of political subjects in Israel "[disturbing] the police order by polemically calling into question the aesthetic coordinates of perception, thought and action". In that sense the dissensus was not aimed only towards Israel's police order, but towards previous moments and periods of dissensus by inventing new modes of actions, expanding the

number of political subjects taking part in the protest, and developing a new aesthetic language which is also connected to other bottom-up politics around the world expressing their dissatisfaction with their own state's police order (Werbner, Webb and Spellman-Poots, 2014).

The way in which the emergence of these 2011 mass movements has constituted a new aesthetic language – meaning offering new ways through which to perceive and organise the world – can be understood using Rancière's (2011:57-60) notion of 'aesthetic community'. An aesthetic community refers to the way a new type of collectivity is formed by occupying a specific place in a given time through sets of gestures, perceptions, and attitudes performed by the body (Ibid). This act of 'occupying' was strongly seen throughout the world during 2011 with protestors taking over squares and boulevards, such as Tharir square in Egypt, White Tower square in Thessaloniki, Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv, Wall Street in New York and Puerto del Sol in Madrid. These were sites that were delimited by multiple visual, verbal and audio forms, such as posters, banners, graffiti, costumes, performances, site-specific installations, music and poetry, all expressing what was described by scholars as a crisis of representation and a call for more direct and participatory forms of democracy (Werbner, Webb and Spellman-Poots, 2014; Azzellini and Sitrin, 2014). The erection of these 'tent cities' where protestors not only demonstrated against the regime, but also practiced alternative ways of living and engaging with politics, produced what Rancière (2011: 58) describes as a 'dissensual figure'. This concept refers to the sensorial clash created between the new sensorial form and that

distributed by the police order. The level of intensity which this clash can produce depends on the effectiveness of the new sensory reality to undermine the existing police order, for example, in Israel, authorities were less tolerant towards encampments that not only protested against the high rent prices, but also against the overall policy of the right-wing government. The strength of the police order reaction depends also on the level of openness and flexibility it shows towards acts of dissensus. This was the case with the Arab Spring which was aimed against authoritarian regimes and led to violent oppression and the outbreak of civil wars (Khatib, 2012; Werbner, Webb and Spellman-Poots, 2014). The last aspect of the constitution of an aesthetic community according to Rancière (2011:58-59) is the assemblage of the dissensual figure with existing sensory reality, to produce a new sense of community. This level should not be understood as the formation of the new police order. According to May's (2010) analysis of Rancière's aesthetic theory, an aesthetic community cannot be institutionalised, as it emerged out of condition of conflict and dissensus is the main quality that holds it together. Within this level, dissensus is articulated differently as the unfulfilled possibility of a new community ("being apart" from the police order) as well as the memory or legacy which connect the present aesthetic community to a possible future where it can be fully imagined ("being together") (Rancière, 2011: 59). The last aspect raises questions regarding the possibilities of political change, or the conceptual limitation of Rancière's understanding of the notion of politics (Ibid). I will continue this enquiry throughout the chapters as I look at the political and

artistic relations between protest movements and socially engaged and collaborative art practices in Israel.

1.3.2 The Aesthetic Regime of Art

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, Rancière's theory on aesthetics provides a framework to understand aesthetics both as a general field of visibility connected to political issues of distributing the sensible, as well as a field of criticism and interpretation of art (Rancière, 2009: 11). Aesthetics in that sense, becomes a regime – a set of perceptions and laws that determines "the ways of doing and making, their corresponding forms of visibility, and way of conceptualising both the former and the latter" (Rancière, 2006: 91). The aesthetic regime is not the only regime in which art is framed, as Rancière (Rancière, 2002: 135 fn1; 2006: 86-91) recognises two other regimes – the ethical regime, and the representational regime of art. The ethical regime designates to art an educational role guiding us towards knowing the truth, and what is good (ibid). The representational regime of art, on the other hand, disconnects art from any moral, religious or social criteria. Instead it locates art within a separate system which determines hierarchy of genres, styles, and judgment. Rancière (Ibid) criticises both the ethical and the representational regimes, arguing that they do not provide a full account of art. They either eliminate aesthetic judgment in favour of moral judgement (the ethical regime) or separate art from other sensory experiences (the representational regime). The aesthetic regime, therefore, suggests a third way in which to combine both logics.[27]

[27] The notion of 'third way' or 'third space' is an important notion within humanities and social and political science, and receives different interpretations by scholars. In general,

Similarly to the aesthetics of politics, aesthetic art influences the sensible through its potential to organise the order of things (Thomas, 2015). Moreover, the process of influencing the sensible within art occurs by using dissensus. It interferes with the modes of representation and challenges existing dichotomous definitions of visibility/invisibility, perceptible/imperceptible and activity/passivity from two positions. The first is within the aesthetic regime of art through questioning hierarchies within the arts, subjects matters, styles and genres. The second is through a constant negotiation and exchange between the aesthetic regime of art and non-artistic regimes, such as the political. By arguing that, Rancière (2006: 81-82, 2009: 13, 46-47, 51) maintains the distinction between art and life, as the politics of aesthetics occurs in the third space between them. This third or dissensual space is understood as a temporary removal from the police order into an alternative sensible reality. It is a contradictory space which is based on the experience of being apart and together, of art being an art and "something else than art" (Rancière, 2002: 137). That which makes art a privileged political practice within the aesthetic regime can be used to explore and challenge society and culture's axioms. It suspends traditional relationships and characteristics of everyday life "allowing for different meanings, subjectivities, and directions to take root" (Tanke, 2011: 78). To demonstrate the meaning of dissensus within an artistic context, Rancière (2011: 74) refers to critical art works such as, Martha Rosler's photographic collages between 1967-1972 that combines images from the Vietnam war

however, it can be defined as a physical or conceptual space which opposes binaric thinking and political oppositions, and engages with politics outside of its power centres and established structures and organisations.

and images of domestic and middle class American life. Rancière (ibid) refers to this type of stylistic juxtaposition as an aesthetic break which brings two different sensory realities: one embodies the everyday manifestations of America lifestyle and happiness and one of imperial America which is either hidden or justified as a defensive war ostensibly intended to protect democracy and the 'free world'. In Rosler's case the break or dissensus within the distribution of the sensible does not lie in the political content of her work, but rather in the production "of a sensory form of strangeness, a clash of heterogeneous elements provoking a rupture in ways of seen and, therewith, an examination of the causes of the oddity" (Ibid).[28]

Although Rancière presents the aesthetic regime of art as a paradigm which can be applied to any form of art in any given context, he identifies its moment of emergence (aka 'the aesthetic revolution': Rancière, 2002) as the end of the 18th century. Within art history, this moment is perceived by Rancière as a turning point regarding the ways artists and thinkers rethought the unique qualities of art and its relationship with life, developing new artistic styles and movements such as Realism, Romanticism, and collage (Tanke, 2011). It is marked as a 'revolution' as it signifies the liberation of art from the representational regime that was in itself another revolutionary liberation from the ethical regime of art (Rancière 2002: 135 fn1; 2006: 91; 2009: 6-

[28] In another place, Rancière (2010: 149-150) brings other examples of critical art where he analyses them in a similar matter to that of Rosler. For example, Chantel Akerman's film, *From the Other Side (De l'autre côté* 2002), which examines the US-Mexico fence along the border; Anri Sala's video art, *Give the Colours* (2003), presenting the project of Tirana's mayor where all the house facades in his town were painted in bright colours; and Pedro Costa's film *In Vanda's Room (No Quarto da Vanda* 2000), telling the story of a young group living in a poor suburb in Lisbon.

7).[29] Within a more current context, Rancière (2010: 11, 212) develops his argument on dissensus in response to the rise of the neo-liberal order and the dominance of political consensus. This is an aspect I will further elaborate on in the next chapter when I refer to Mouffe's model of radical and plural democracy which understands dissensus rather than consensus as the main base of democratic relations.

Rancière's approach towards art is used for the purpose of re-evaluating Israeli art discourse. But first, it is important to ask what are the sets of values, references and perceptions upon which Israeli art is built? According to the art historian Gideon Ofrat (2014: online), there have been at least 14 attempts at a historiography of Israeli art since 1939. Despite the multiplicity of voices, and the authors' personal taste and bias that resulted in a tendency to emphasise certain artists and trends while ignoring others, there is a consensus regarding the overall divisions and pattern in Israeli art (Ibid). The most evident consensus is the division of Israeli art into decades, each focused around main figures (individual artists or dominant artist groups), and dominant styles and mediums. Apart from the establishment of the Bezalel School of Art (1906), the years prior to the establishment of Israel were characterised by European influences on Israeli paintings, especially French post-impressionism (1920-1930, associated with the city of Tel Aviv) and German expressionism (1930, associated with the city of Jerusalem) (Tammuz, 1980). Since the 1940s there are new attempts to produce more

[29] Similarly to the aesthetic regime, Rancière (2006) understands the ethical and representational regimes of both historical periods as a general art paradigm. He associates the ethical regime of art with Plato, the representational regime of art with Aristotle.

localised Israeli or Hebrew styles, such as the Canaanites (1940s) who were inspired by the Mesopotamian civilization, and New Horizons (1940s-1960s) who created abstract paintings inspired by the qualities of local bright light and topography (Zalmona, 2013). The decades following by the 1970s are characterised by growing cosmopolitan tendencies, with the adoption of conceptual, neo-expressionist and later, New Media art, with more Israeli artists working outside, or not solely inside, Israel (Omer, 1998; Rabina, 2008; Mendelsohn, 2008).

Apart from a chronological consensus, there are also repetitive themes that can be found throughout the development of Israeli art such as the search for home or a localised identity (Frame Story: 100 Years of Israeli art, 2008). These were framed within a dialectic model which largely refers to the tension between ‘here’ and ‘there’, or the ‘local’ and ‘universal’. The most significant validation for this model comes from 1986 retrospective exhibition *The Want of the Matter: A Quality in Israeli Art* which is further discussed in the third chapter. Sarah Breitberg-Semel (1986), the curator of this exhibition, suggested an overall thesis from which to evaluate Israeli art. The chosen artworks, with emphasis on paintings by Tel Aviv based artists, have all demonstrated a unique interpretation – or ‘domestication’ or ‘localisation’, in the curator’s words (1986: online) - of Western artistic trends which are based on the specific cultural and geographic location from which Israeli artists made their works. Local Israeli art could then be understood as art that is drawn to the East – the primitive, the raw, the rooted – but it is mediated through the civilised filters of Western art, be it academic painting,

abstract or conceptual art. *The Want of the Matter* has since gained canonical status within an Israeli art discourse that encapsulates the hierarchical system of locations, institutions, genres and mediums that constitute what can be understood as the representational regime of Israeli art (Roei, 2016). According to Manor (2005[b]), the dominance of this system is mostly evident when looking at critical and curatorial interventions within the historiography of Israeli art, which accepts the dialectic model and only offers a critical gaze or an alternative history that complements it.

In this thesis I focus on the political or critical content that arises from the art collectives' works. I use Rancière's aesthetic regime of art to emphasise the ways in which art collectives suggest new time-space configurations and new modes of seeing and being. As such, this thesis is not a chronological analysis of Israeli art, where the emergence of contemporary collaborative and socially engaged art practice is merely the latest development within an already fixed narrative; nor does it offer an account of alternative sites of art production that complement this narrative. It focuses on what I understand as the expansion of artistic margins via the proliferation of non-profit, autonomous, radical and/or activist spaces which have become significant sites for art production and circulation for artists and activists in Israel. This is where I argue Rancière's aesthetic theory is limited. First most of Ranciére's interpretative work focuses on artworks that take place in the established and institutionalised domain of art which include major museums, galleries and biennales. I argue that the way Ranciére understands aesthetic dissensus is insufficient when one examines critical and political works of art that occur

outside of these major art spaces. More substantially, Ranciére's (2010: 140) emphasises the differences between political dissensus (a "political process of subjectiviation") and aesthetic dissensus ("modes of visibility that re-configure the fabric of sensory experience"). Returning back to his analysis of Rosler's photographic collages, Ranciére (2011: 75) argues that "there is no reason why the sensory oddity produced by the clash of heterogeneous elements should bring about an understanding of the state of the world; and no reason either why understanding the state of the world should prompt a decision to change it". In this thesis I examine art collectives, such as Empty House and Onya, whose formation was largely interconnected to the J14 movement, and others, such as Muslala and Arteam that aspire to push for a consciousness and political change through artistic practices. As such I would expand on Rancière by offering a more dynamic interpretation on the movement between aesthetic and political dissensions, as well as of art's negotiation with non-artistic domains. For this purpose, I will introduce Guattari's aesthetic paradigm with its key notion of transversality which I use as the main research model for understanding the intersection of aesthetics and politics.

1.4 Félix Guattari's Aesthetic Paradigm

As mentioned, Rancière's aesthetic regime provides a theory for understanding the relationship between art and politics. In addition, Rancière's interest in aesthetics goes beyond art to matters concerning the formation of collective subjectivities through the notion of aesthetic community (Hinderliter et al., 2009). Committed to a similar task of producing

new subjectivities, Guattari (1995: 1-5) develops an aesthetic paradigm which suggests transversal, multiple, and unfixed factors which engender individuals, collective and institutional subjectivities and which takes into consideration current technological, ecological and political circumstances. Guattari (Ibid: 7) identifies creativity and emotions as the aesthetic paradigm's main power of enunciations, in comparison to philosophy (thinking) and science's (knowing) power of enunciations. The aesthetic paradigm's qualities are equally important to those of philosophy and science to the shaping of the memory, sensibility and actions of subjectivities, and the exposure to what Guattari refers as unfamiliar universes of references and values (Ibid). The term 'universe' is part of Guattari's (Guattari, 2014) complex ontological structure which explained how relations, affiliations and territories are constructed in the world and goes beyond the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, based on examples used by Guattari to explain the term in relation to art, I will use the term 'universes of references and values' to point at the various forms of expressions, emotions and narratives that are combined together in the art collectives' work to produce a new aesthetic experience.[30]

[30] For example, in *Chaosmosis,* Guattari (1995: 6) brings an example from La Borde clinic where a patient with a poor agricultural background was invited to experiment with plastic arts, drama and video. Guattari (ibid) understands this experience as introducing the patient "universes [that] had been unknown to them". To describe the quality of performance art Guattari (Ibid: 90) writes: "performance art delivers the instant to the vertigo of the emergence of Universes that are simultaneously strange and familiar. It has the advantage of drawing out the full implications of this extraction of intensive, a-temporal, a-spatial, a-signifying dimensions from the semiotic net of everyday life". And in an interview held with Guattari (cited in Alliez and Goffey, 2011: 33) in 1992 he describes the effect music lessons had on him when he was a child: "I studied the piano when I was a child. I continued to play for a long time and I can say which musical universes served as references for me, as routes of access to other aesthetic universes, because after all, musical universes are the most gratuitous, those that call inter-subjective relations into question most radically".

Another similarity to Rancière is the understanding that the aesthetic paradigm is a broader set of values and perceptions not only applicable to art, although Guattari formulates different sets of concepts, perceptions and values. Alongside the aesthetic paradigm, Guattari identifies two other prior paradigms that define the relationship of art and other aspects of life. The first is the proto-aesthetic paradigm in which art is embedded under transcendent principles, such as Divinity, Truth, Power, Beauty and the Good (Bishop, 2012: 361fn71; Guattari, 1995: 99). This paradigm is characterised with a "territorialised Assemblage of enunciation" which bind the above principles to defined groups such as family, community, tribe or nation (Guattari 1995: 101). In Guattari's theory, assemblage is another name for a group in which its political, technological, linguistic and psychological compositions are in a constant state of movement and change (Genosko, 2009: 35, 76; Lazzarato, 2008: 176, 181). The formations of assemblages are determined by both 'stabilising' factors, such as the police order (using Rancière's term) that offer a sense of national and social security, as well as disturbing and eruptive factors ('lines of flight' Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 3-4) that are also understood here as political and aesthetic dissensus (see also: Gilbert, 2014: 151). In contrast to the proto-aesthetic paradigm, the second paradigm is the "capitalist assemblage" which is characterised with a "deterritorialised Assemblage of enunciation" (Bishop, 2012: 361fn71; Guattari, 1995: 103). Within this paradigm, any transcendent and unified principle is demolished in favour of divided, sectoral, hierarchical and sterilised structures. These structures are reorganised under new principles

of reason, understanding, will and affectivity. Within this paradigm art has stopped being under the service of Divinity, Beauty or the Good (as in the first paradigm) and become bound to the capitalist market (Ibid). The ways in which Guattari characterises each of these prior paradigms are used here to explain the different political, economic and cultural transitions that have affected the continuous constructive and de-constructive processes of forming collective subjectivities in Israel. I will further elaborate on these processes in the second chapter.[31]

The aesthetic paradigm then is understood as the removal of art from the capitalist assemblage. It is similar to the proto-aesthetic paradigm in the sense that it marks a new understanding of an integration of art with life. However it differs in the sense that this integration does not occur under one set of universes of values and references. In that sense the aesthetic paradigm can be understood as a reterritorialised assemblage of enunciation consisting of ideas, practices, experiences and sentiments which produce new possible territories that are more diversified and heterogeneous (Genosko, 2009: 76; Gilbert, 2013: 151; Guattari, 1995: 105). Guattari (1995: 1-4) identifies the socio-political context of the aesthetic paradigm with the fall of the iron curtain, the global distribution of capitalism, the counter nationalistic and religious reactions in post-Soviet Union countries, and the emergence of new technologies of information and communication. Within this context, Guattari (1995: 105) suggests the aesthetic paradigm as a possibility, as it is not fully emerged but its beginnings can already be traced.

[31] For another example of using Guattari and Deleuze and Guattari model of territorialisation-deterritorialisation-reterritorialisation within an Israeli and Jewish context see: Pedaya, 2011.

As such, the aesthetic paradigm plays a role in resisting the divided, sectoral, hierarchical and sterilised structure of capitalism and its one-dimensional model of subjectivity.[32] Art – or at least underground art, according to Guattari – does this by confronting established borders both in the field of art and in arts' relations with other fields. Its power of creativity thus provides the ability to produce "unprecedented, unforeseen and unthinkable qualities of being" (Ibid: 106).

Guattari's understanding of art as a universe that opens up new possibilities of living with ourselves, others and the world links back with Rancière's notion of dissensus. Altogether, I will consider dissensus, feelings and creativity as the main aesthetic qualities that stand at the core of any act of art and politics discussed in this research. Yet it is important to note Guattari's different take on art's relations with the ethical regime. Guttari's (1995: 107) aesthetic paradigm holds "ethico-political implications". Ethics within this context is understood as a responsibility to ensure the equality of any form of life in the planet and which is engendered within the creative act (Ibid). This is a different conclusion to that of Rancière (2002: 135fn1) which understands the aesthetic and the ethical regimes as separate. Guttari's insights on the relations between aesthetics and ethics is also manifested in his scholarly work that did not focus on art, but rather on "artistic *techniques and practices*" which are used in other fields, such as psychiatry and ecology (cited in Lazzarato, 2008: 174; see also Guattari, 1992; 2014).[33] This

[32] One dimensional in the sense that everything under capitalism is going through a process of economisation, making an equivalence between labour and goods, thus silencing "all other modes of valorisation" (Guattari, 1995: 28-29).

[33] According to Genosko (2009: 78-83), Guattari did refer to several artists as an example for transversal lines of ruptures, such as George Condo, David Wojnarowicz, Ian

circulation of aesthetics' qualities in non-artistic fields, as well as designating art an emancipatory, empowering and mobilising role role is highly relevant to this thesis' discussion.[34] Using Guattari's terminology will enable me to discuss the art collectives' conceptual and physical navigation between the public and private, institutionalised and alternative spaces of the art system, as well as other non-artistic regimes, such as the political, the educational and the ecological (Mckee, 2016).[35] To further elaborate on this framework, the following paragraphs examine the notions of affect and emotions as moving forces within the production of new aesthetic assemblage.

1.5 Revolutionary Affects and the Power of Emotions

As was briefly mentioned in the previous section, according to Guattari, affect and emotions are central factors in the production of new subjectivities and sensory realities. The following further explores these notions, the differences between affect and emotions, and the place aesthetic theory and the Israeli context takes within this research.

1.5.1 Affect Theory and the Production of Subjectivities

The notion of affect is discussed in the collaborative and individual works of Deleuze and Guattari. Generally, affect is understood as a primarily bodily

Wallace, Shin Takamatsu and Rachel Whiteread. Yet he never constituted a definitive aesthetic, rather emphasising the importance of heterogeneous, polyphonic and multitude forms.

[34] In this thesis I rely on other theorists and art practitioners who advocate a political, ethical and education role for art. See for example, the anthologies Elliott, Silverman and Bowman, 2016; and Werbner, Webb and Spellman-Poots, 2014.

[35] Mckee (2016: 11) uses the term 'art system' as opposed to the more conventional term 'art world' which "connotes a unitary, self-enclosed cultural universes of like-minded cognoscente, making, viewing, judging, and sometimes buying and selling works of art". 'Art system' instead includes several and more diversified institutions and platform, such as auction houses, commercial galleries, major museums, NGOs, governmental agencies, the academy and activist spaces, that maintain a symbiotic relationships via art journals and eduction.

reaction to an encounter with another subject, object or sensation. It provides a framework which explores the unconscious ways in which surfaces, institutions, languages and subjects impact bodies, as well as the ways these affect the distribution of the sensible by “disrupt[ing] habitual and entrenched ways of thinking” (Hickey-Moody and Peta, 2007: 8). Affect is an important notion within the aesthetic paradigm as its qualities of intensity and immediacy encompass the ability to transfer and assemble sensory experiences and cut across ways of classification and identification (Genosko, 2009; Massumi, 2015). Philosophically, affect is used to constitute new subjectivities that contrast with the ideal Cartesian consciousness by adopting more of a Spinozian approach. The last rejects the Cartesian dualism between mind and body, and the privileging of the mind and reason as the base of the subject’s existence and knowledge. Instead, Spinoza’s argument stems from a definition of ‘being’ that is based on the experience of bodily intensities and affects. As such, the affective state of bodies makes them in a constant relational state (See: Gilbert, 2014: 46; Kester, 2011: 178-179).

Deleuze and Guattari (1987; see also: Hickey-Moody and Peta, 2007; Genosko, 2009) acknowledge aesthetics as the main regime for producing revolutionary affects. Aesthetics’ ability to create new sensory experiences puts the subject in a state of becoming in which the subject is invested in new and unfamiliar universes which cannot be entirely deciphered by one’s sensory reality. Becoming should not be understood in terms of imitation or a process that leads to a final state of ‘being’. Rather, becoming is a constant

state of movement, dislocation and relocation. Deleuze and Guattari's (Ibid) description of becoming is similar to Rancière's understanding of dissensus within the aesthetic regime of art. Both refer to an in-between state that lacks a clear sense identity. In this state, a revolutionary affect can relocate this experience beyond the confined and localised space in which it emerged.

Understanding affect as a deep bodily reaction which intervenes in our ways of thinking and feeling, resonates with the 'therapeutic shock' legacy of the Western avant-garde which emphasised the creation of provocative and disruptive encounters thus "revealing new, critical insight into the formation of individual[s] and collective[s]" (Kester, 2011: 183). These can be seen, for example, in the provocative performances onstage and on the streets of the Italian Futurists, and the participatory events in public spaces organised by Paris Dada (Bishop, 2012). Despite the different ideological positions that each group took, they both used antagonist gestures, such as swearwords and tricks, as a way to make the participants more aware of themselves and therefore more engaged in whatever activities and tasks they were asked to do, as well as unintentional reactions. The use of these gestures within avant-garde art practices was seen as pedagogical methods training and preparing the participants for possible and more desirable futures (Ibid). The pedagogical impact of art's 'therapeutic shock' is often associated with Friedrich Schiller's text *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* from 1794 (Bishop, 2012; Ranciére, 2002). According to Bishop (2012: 26-30), Schiller acknowledges art's potential to enhance human morality as a result of its in-between location (what is understood by Ranciére as the aesthetic regime of

art). This is because art is connected to human desires and drives, but also detached from it, as it always searches for the promise of a better world.

There are also sceptical approaches to the role of art as an educational tool and the place of shock and provocation as effective educational tools. Kester (2011: 51-53), for example, criticises what seems to him to be the premise of art's educational role regarding the immaturity of any form of political action within the world. According to this premise, it is only when everyone receives an aesthetic education that humanity will be able to properly handle unforeseen scenarios. In addition, he points out the problematic connection between the 'therapeutic shock' and education. Kester associates shock and disruption with trauma more than with insights and reflection. As a result, according to him, the disturbed subject will find it difficult to have new understandings of the world (Ibid). This debate helps to inform my analysis of the case studies. In relation to each, I ask what art can teach its viewers or participants and what kind of methods art uses to produce things we haven't experienced yet.

1.5.2 Emotions and Politics

In contrast to the primarily and immediate qualities of affect, emotions are more formalised reactions which come as a result of the encounter with an object or subject. While Delueze and Guattari emphasise the revolutionary or transformative potentialities that can emerge from an aesthetic experience I am also interested in the way in which subjects process these experience and react to them. For this purpose, I rely on Sara Ahmed's model of the sociality of emotions which critiques both the psychological approach (inside

out) and a sociological approach (outside in) to emotions. Within Ahmed's (2004: 10) model both the psychic and the social are the effects of emotions rather than the cause of it: "emotions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place". In other words, the surface and boundaries that define the relations between 'I' and 'You', 'We' and 'Them' (and the rest of the combination created within these four categories) are shaped through the relationships between our emotional responses to objects and subjects. These relationships are based both on the movement of the objects of emotion, as well as attachment and connections. As such, Ahmed (Ibid: 8, 15) suggests the concept of 'affective economies' to look at the way emotions are circulated between bodies.[36] Emotions are thus empty categories "without positive values" as they do not inherently lie within bodies and things (Ahmed, 2004: 44-45). This understanding of emotions also resonates with this research's understanding of subjects articulated in the current thesis: "Emotions do not positively inhabit *anybody* or *anything*, meaning that 'the subject' is simply one nodal point in the economy, rather that its origin and destination" (Ibid: 46).

Ahmed's model of the sociality of emotions raises some issues that relate to this research. The production of subjectivities and the sensible order as emotions are essential to processes of alliances and attachments. This model asks what moves us, what makes us feel, what makes us stay, and

[36] To focus her enquiry on how emotions work and what emotions do, rather than asking what emotions are, Ahmed does not offer coherent definitions that distinguish between emotions and affect, as well as other types of sensorial terms, such as sensation, cognition and impression (Ibid: 17fn7).

what makes us leave. I will refer to these sets of questions from several angles. The first has to do with the things that motivate the art collectives to come together as a group and "[feel] their ways" in the different fields they operate (Ibid: 12). The second is connected to the production of affects in the collectives' practices, and the ways in which these affects are translated into emotions which then produce new surfaces which define subjectivities and intersubjective relationships. Some of the emotions that are discussed revolve around hate, anger, fear, love, fondness and empathy. The last issue concerning the sociality of emotions is the way collaborative art practices posit a challenge to the populist tone within the political and public discourse in Israel. This tone is used to establish boundaries between 'us' - that is, "the legitimate subject of the nation … the true recipient of national benefits" - and 'them' - those who threaten to interfere with the sensible order (Ahmed, 2004: 1).[37] As nationality is the main form of identification in Israel and determines the level of participation and belonging to the police order, I will examine the production of collective subjectivities that are based on other forms of emotional attachments, such as solidarity, friendship, and mutual culture.

As already noted, within the interdisciplinary framework of this research, Guattari's notion of transversality plays a key role not merely as a concept

[37] Some examples of statements from politicians that outline new us/them boundaries include: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's saying in 1997 to a renowned Sephardic Rabbi and Kabbalist "the left has forgotten what it is to be a Jew", which in 2017 was embraced by the Chairman of the Israeli Labour party Avi Gabay; Netanyahu's saying during the Israeli election of 2015 that "the Arabs massively flow to vote in the election with buses funded by left-wing organisations"; And current Minister of Culture and Sport Miri Regev's saying in 2012 that: "The Sudanese are cancer within the body of the nation".

applied to analyse the case studies, but as a model from which to analyse the intersection of art, politics and change. Since Guattari's understanding of transversality was formed throughout his political, philosophical and psychiatric enquiries – both theoretical and practical – I will focus on the way this model was adopted in art theory. I will especially refer to Raunig's (2002; 2007) definition for transversality which allows the drawing and mapping of different transversal concatenations between art, politics, and change.

1.6 Transversality as an Aesthetic Model (Thesis Chapters)

Transversality is generally understood as a "tool to open hitherto closed logics and hierarchies", "a line rather than a point", and a "militant, social, undisciplined creativity" (Genosko, 2014: 58, 81-82). As mentioned, transversality opposes both vertical and horizontal forms, producing lines that combine under a-centric structures, which cuts through different categories of identification, collective and institutional processes, and Universes of values and references. Within an art context Raunig (2002: online) further develops the discontinuous, diagonal and eruptive qualities of transversality. He offers three criteria from which to evaluate transversal movements between art and activist groups within a globalised-critical context: transnational, transsector, and a-centric constellations. These three characteristics emphasise the coming together of people from different national and professional backgrounds to protest against issues that are not limited to one country or one social and ethnic group. The goal of their struggle is not to form or connect a centre(s), but to maintain these "lines of

flight, ruptures, which continuously elude the systems of points and their coordinates" (Raunig, 2007: 205). The collectives, organisations and individuals temporarily collaborate and overlap under "a flowing political organisation with an open end" as a way to prevent future forms of unified models and power apparatuses intended to replace the current order (Raunig, 2002: online). This is something Raunig (Ibid) identifies especially in the organisational processes of social movements since the end of the 1990s, such as the *Noborder Network* and the anti-globalisation movement (see also: Feigenbaum, Frenzel and McCurdy, 2013). Historically, Raunig (2007: 205-206) argues that these transversal lines hadn't occurred prior to the 1970s, and even then it was quite an abstract or partial theory which was used mostly to posit itself against structuralist theory. However, during the 1980s one can see the emergence of transversal projects, such as the anti-AIDS platform ACT-UP, the Third Wave Feminism platform Women's Action Coalition (WAC), and the "Wohlfahrtsausschüsse […] against racist and nationalist policies" (Ibid).[38] Apart from the criteria outlined by Raunig, I will suggest another characteristic for transversality which is changeability. This characteristic is based on avant-garde theories which identify three types of criticism in avant-garde movements: social criticism, institutional criticism, and self-criticism (Bürger, 1984; Rancière, 2011; Raunig, 2007). My

[38] It is worth mentioning other scholars from political theory who use transversality within the context of global struggles, such as Richard K. Ashley (1989), David Campbell (1996), and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2006). Ronald Bleiker (2000: 119; cited from: Genosko, 2009: 63), for example, refers to the fall of Berlin Wall as a "transversal phenomenon – one in which various discursive dynamics and various forms of agency were operating in a multitude of interconnected spheres, including terrains of dissent that ranged from street protest to the publication of underground literary magazines". For a comparison of the notion of transversality between Guattari and Foucault, see Genosko 2009: 64-69.

argument is that self-criticism within a transversal context leads to essential changes within the activities or goal of movements and groups as a result of both external and internal circumstances.

These criteria are used here to analyse the art collectives as transversal case studies and to structure the chapters in this thesis. As such each chapter will be dedicated to one or two elements of transversality. The second chapter examines the production of new collective subjectivities through socially engaged and collaborative art practices. It asks how the formation of new art communities can formulate a critique to the ethno-national model of identification and categorisation by which individual and collective subjects in Israel are classified. To answer this question this chapter analyses three projects, Muslala's *Between Green and Red* (2012, 2013, 2015), Empty House's *Kibbutz DIY* (2012) and ARTEAM's *The Garden Library* (2009-ongoing), which involve the construction of a space for an existing or a new community. This discussion is framed within the socio-political context of the Israeli order, especially its current identity politics discourse in which nationality and ethnicity are its main reference points. Through the analysis of the case studies I would argue that the art collectives contributes to the expansion of other types of forms of identification that are not bound to the fixed categorisation of subjects living in Israeli – both citizens and non-citizens. These types of formations are understood as transnational and transectoral. They are transnational because they produce spaces with shared values, desires and needs that are not limited to a specific ethnic or national group. They are transectoral as they incorporate

subjects from different professional and disciplinary backgrounds, which circulate and share their skills and knowledge with each other.

In addition to the theoretical framework discussed in the introduction, I also rely on Mouffe's (1993) non-essentialist approach towards subjects which stands at the core of her political theory examined in the second chapter. Mouffe's theory is relevant to the discussion on the formation of transversal subjectivities within a heterogeneous and divided socio-political context. Similar to Rancière and Guattari, Mouffe (Ibid: 12) understands the subject as "a decentred, detotalized agent, a subject constructed at the point of intersection of a multiplicity of subject positions between which there exists no a priori or necessary relation". This approach supports Mouffe's (1993: 7; 2008: 9) model of radical and plural democracy which acknowledges differences and conflicts as essential components of democracy, as well as the struggle of marginal groups against inequality and exclusion. In the second chapter, I use Mouffe's theory to posit an alternative to the exclusive and antagonistic model of the Israeli police order, and to explore the inter-subjective relationships between the art collective and the various participants and collaborators who take part in their projects. In addition to Mouffe, I also use Étienne Balibar's (2004) discussion on border zones and citizenship to analyse the type of transnational space produced in Arteam's project, *The Garden Library*, in Neve Sha'anan neighbourhood in Tel Aviv. According to Balibar (Ibid: 1-2), border zones are areas whose peripheral location and diverse population produce a different sense of collectivity which challenges the ethno-national meaning of citizenship. Compared to the other

projects discussed in the second chapter, *The Garden Library* is directly aimed at solving a political problem concerning the lack of educational and cultural spaces for asylum seekers in Israel. As such, it would be relevant to discuss the question of how can alternative forms of citizenships be practised through artistic means.

The third chapter focuses on the production of new spatio-temporal constellations that are understood as a-centric. It develops the notion of a-centricism through Deleuze and Guttari's (1987: 6-17) theory of the rhizome. Briefly, the rhizome is a system of thought that derives its forms from the root system that characterises many types of plants. It is based on principles of heterogeneity, multiplicity and non-linearity (Ibid). The rhizome is used as a model to critique the linear and centralised historiography of Israeli art. As such, this chapter asks how the use of socially engaged and collaborative art practice can reconfigure the sites of art production and circulation, as well as Israeli art history's modes of identification and categorisation. I examine this issue by analysing Muslala's project *The Black Panthers Road* (2011). It was a collaboration with the residents of Musrara and members of the Israeli Black Panthers that commemorated the political and cultural legacy of this movement in the neighbourhood where it was formed. I would argue that this project is rhizomatic as it re-maps and re-contextualises Israeli political and art history within a new collective assemblage of references and values. This reconfiguration is seen in the contents addressed in *The Black Panthers Road*, such a Mizrahi history, the subjects who collaborate in this project, including the residents of Musrara neighbourhood, members of Black

Panthers movement and local artists, and in the actual art route that paved *The Black Panther Road*. This chapter also asks how the treatment of *The Black Panther Road* toward the aforementioned issues and figures is different from the way they are perceived by the representational regime of Israeli art.

The fourth chapter analyses the notion of change in relation to socially engaged and collaborative art practice. The notion of change is understood here in two ways. The first is the impact the art collectives have on the political, communal and creative fields with which they are engaged. The second is the impact of bureaucratic, political and personal factors on the artistic directions taken by of the art collective. It asks how do the art collectives maintain autonomous spaces for artistic and creative expressions in light of processes of institutionalisation? I look at this question through the art collectives recent artistic development including the NGOisation of Arteam *The Garden Library*, and the institutionalisation of Muslala and Empty House recent projects, *The Terrace* (2016-ongoing) and *The Factory* (2016-ongoing), respectively. In this chapter, I would also introduce the last art collective – Onya collective – and its members' attempts to find non-artistic partners to co-manage the communal garden space they created in the new CBS (*The Ramp* 2016-ongoing). The art collectives' preferences for long-term projects and collaboration with representative bodies of the Israeli police order also raise the question of what inspires these kinds of choices? Using a transversal framework is then used here to recontextualise the meanings of change and institutionalisation which are often seen in the

critical art discourse as two oppositions. I would argue that these changes, which occur within the art collectives' works, do not necessarily indicate the neutralization of their critical voice. Rather they suggest the creation of new sustainable economic and communal models that are based on civic initiative, shared labor and environmental awareness.

2. The Production of New Collective Subjectivities in Israel

As the title of this thesis suggests, collectivism is a key element within the latest emergence of socially engaged and collaborative art practices in Israel. It can be argued that art groups and collectives are something that characterise the narrative of Israeli art. Important landmarks within Israeli art history that suggest a change in style are often marked by the formation of a new collective that have outlined a new artistic agenda. This includes hegemonic art groups, such as the Canaanites (1940s) and New Horizons (1940s-1960s), that were mentioned in the introduction, and 10+ (1960s) which will be mentioned again in the next chapter. It also includes groups that received lesser attention from Israeli art institutions, such as Ha'ashara (1950s), Mashkof (1960s), Aklim (1970s), Rega (1980s) and Zik group (1985-ongoing). However, when comparing these groups to the art collectives in discussion we see some essential differences. According to Zalomna (2013), due to the small-scale size of the Israeli art system, one of the ways to gain visibility was to operate as a group. Moreover, despite each art group sharing similar stylistic and conceptual elements, the works that were created within these groups were individual. The art collectives discussed in this thesis adopt a different understanding of collaboration and shared work that is part of the global social turn of contemporary art within the last few decades (Lind, 2007). With the expansion of global capitalism since the 1990s and the liberalisation of social and welfare systems, adopting collaborative forms within an art context was largely understood as a critique on the individualisation and financialisation of everyday life (Gilbert,

2014; Kester, 2011).[39] Collectivity as a base of creation and art production was also another way to challenge the modern legacy of the genius and the autonomous artist and its understanding of authorship and authenticity (Enwezor, 2007).

This chapter examines the production of new art collective-based subjectivities in light of the ethno-national discourse that shape collective identities in Israel. It focuses on three case studies: Muslala, *Between Green and Red – The Meeting Point* (2012, 2013) and *The Meeting Point – Under the Bridge* (2015), Empty House, *Kibbutz – DIY* (2012), and Arteam, *The Garden Library* (2009 - ongoing). Each case study offers a different framework through which to challenge the dominant modes of identification within Israeli society. By constructing new spaces for new communities to emerge, the case studies explore the possibilities of bi-national collaborations towards an inclusive and equal space (Muslala), of artistic, sustainable and communal spaces for creative subjects living in the city (Empty House), and of transnational communities in marginal areas

39

Bishop (2012: 4) emphasises that participatory forms in contemporary art are not always synonymous with anti-capitalism. She refers to art collectives in South America during the 1960s and in the Soviet-Union from the 1970s that responded to military dictatorship and centralised communist economy.

(Arteam). While each case study holds its own political and artistic agendas, and goals and methods, they are discussed together as each mediates and responds in its own way with the notions of collectivity and identity by using the aesthetic regime of art to produce new sensory realities. As this discussion is a reaction to the current identity politics in Israel and the national-neo-liberal order in which this politics is framed, this chapter opens with an overview of the dominant identity discourse and its discontents since the beginning of the Zionist movement up to the present day.

2.1 The Subjectivisation of Israeli Identities

2.1.1 The Four Tribes model

In 2015 Israeli president, Reuven Rivlin, gave a speech at a conference in the city of Herzliya entitled “The New Israeli Order”. The speech has since attained the informal name of “The Four Tribes Speech” and was occasionally referenced in the media as well as in academic papers (Dvir, 2015; Keidar, 2018; Ronen, 2018). Rivlin’s speech acknowledged fundamental demographic changes within Israeli society that he thought might lead to the weakening of the hegemonic group (secular Ashkenazi Israeli-Jews) following the growth of other minority groups. The four ‘main tribes’ consisted of three Israeli-Jewish groups and an Israeli non-Jewish group: secular Jews, national-religious Jews, Ultra-Orthodox Jews (Haredi Jews in Hebrew) and Israeli-Arabs (Palestinian-Arabs with Israeli citizenship. I will refer them here as Israeli-Palestinians). Israel has become, according to Rivlin, a sectoral or a ‘tribal’ society, in which its groups are “essentially different from one another and growing closer in size” (Ronen, 2018: 66).

There is much to discuss with regard to the meaning of this tribal division, the dynamic between these four 'tribes', and the place of other categories of identification such as class, ethnicity and gender. Some scholars, such as the sociologist Sammy Smooha, emphasises the place of ethnicity alongside religious identification, and ascribes distinct categories to Ashkenazi Jews, Mizrahi Jews, Haredi Jews, Israeli-Palestinians and Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories.[40] Others, such as the sociologist Baruch Kimmerling, also mentions the latest waves of immigration from the 1990s which formed new 'tribes' with distinct cultural characteristics. These include immigrants from the former Soviet-Union, as well as Ethiopian Jews (Ram, 2011).[41] Regardless of the numbers of groups constituting the 'tribes' in Israeli society, this term can be broadly understood as a collective cohesiveness around a common belief, religion or a costume (Maffesolli, 1996). Moreover this type of tribal cohesiveness often takes priority over individual needs, as well as being the main reference point from which the individual's success is evaluated (Kimmerling, 2008: 31). It is also important to note that each tribe holds a different level of integration and participation within the Israeli police order. For example, the three Jewish 'tribes' (secular, national-religious and ultra-orthodox) are part of the dominant national group and as such enjoy collective benefits as a recognised national group that Israeli-Palestinians do not (Avigur-Eshel and Filc, 2017). The latter are recognised as an ethnic or religious minority, but not a national group. At the same time, different

[40] As my research examines art practices occurring within the internationally recognised borders of Israel, I will use the term Palestinian-Arabs to describe Palestinians living in Israel who have Israeli citizenship or a status of permanent residency.

[41] Immigration from the former Soviet-Union was made possible by virtue of the Israeli "law of return" which grants automatic Israeli citizenship to everyone who has a Jewish grandparent or is married to a Jewish person, regardless of being Jewish according to Orthodox Jewish laws. The immigration of Ethiopian Jews was a result of the change of regime in Ethiopia in 1991 which put the Jewish community in the country at risk.

religious and ethnic tribes within the Jewish population are excluded from positions of power, such as within the government, the academy, the media and culture (Shohat, 1989; Sperber, 2010). These dynamics suggest an hierarchy within the modes of categorisation that prioritises national affiliation, followed by other socio-economic, geographic, and ethnic divisions (Peled and Shafir, 2004; Tzfadia and Yacobi, 2011). Nonetheless, they also indicate that the 'Israeli tribes' are not fixed forms of classification, but rather a multiplicity of groups and collectivities whose members navigate, often simultaneously. As mentioned earlier, an objective of this chapter is to draw more fluid, inclusive and plural forms of collectivities. For this purpose, the following paragraphs trace the constructive and de-constructive processes of forming collective subjectivities in Israel. This will bring us back to Rivlin's main observation regarding the current growth of a society that lacks a common ground and the way this challenge can be addressed through socially engaged and collaborative art practices (Ronen, 2018).

The question of how communities, societies and nations constitute themselves is central to the aesthetic framework used in this thesis. As mentioned in the introduction, 'the common' is produced through sets of laws, norms, institutions, and actions initiated by the police order which determines who and what comes together within a community, as well as the conditions of members' participation or acceptance. The process of distributing the sensible prompts us to ask three questions: what are the characteristics of a certain order? who constitutes it? And, how is the order maintained? According to the sociologist Uri Ram (2011), the distribution of the sensible within the Israeli-Jewish order is based around the two themes

of unity and continuity. Since the emergence of the Zionist movement in the nineteenth-century to the first two decades of the nation-building phase of the Israeli state, Israeli identity and history were assumed to be fixed and homogeneous.[42] The birth of the nation state was legitimised within a linear and unified narrative which absorbed its content from the biblical promise of the people of Israel returning to their land after 2000 years of exile. According to this narrative, these 2000 years of 'temporary' absence were an interim period that lacked an existential meaning to the lives of Jews. Similarly, Jewish identity was seen as partial and in a state of an existential crisis as it was de-territorialised from its national home (Ram, 2011: 4; Raz-Krakotzkin, 1993).

In Israel, what is known as the 'melting pot' policy was the main strategy by which the police order – then led by the Israeli-Jewish labour movement – composed a sort of new-old Israeli subject during the first three decades of the Israeli state. The waves of mass Jewish immigration to Israel in the 1950s and 1960s from Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia composed of people with diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. It was then considered as a necessity by the police order to form a new subject that would be subordinate to the new Israeli state. The 'melting pot' policy aimed to create a congruence between Israeli identity, its regime and its national

[42] The Zionist movement was one of the ways in which European Jews redefined the 'Jewish collective' in the modern era. It is also important to note that the Zionist movement in the beginning was a heterogeneous movement which constantly debated the nature of Jewishness, Jewish identity and Jewish nationhood, as well as the future of Jews in the modern world (Ram, 2011). It included within it socialists, communists, nationalists, liberals, revisionists, secular and religious people. Alongside their ideological disagreements, they shared a common ground when it came to immediate and practical issues such as Aliyah (Jewish immigration to Palestine/the land of Israel), settlements, security, and establishing a national economy and agriculture. It changed once Israel was established and pluralism was put aside in favour of statehood and centralisation. The Israeli state has become another name for the Zionist sovereignty (Rosenberg, 2011).

culture. For younger generations it was especially the education system and the military institution that functioned in ways that strengthened emotional ties with the land and the national collectivity (Ram, 2011).

As mentioned, the distribution of the sensible of the Israeli order in its first two decades was associated with the socialist, secular, Ashkenazi elite. According to critical scholars, the Israeli police order contains contradictions that were attributed to the geographical and cultural dislocation from Western civilisation (Khinski, 2006; Shohat, 1989), and the transformation from a stateless ethnic minority to a national sovereignty (Boyarin and Boyarin 1994; Kemp, 2000). One can find the gap, for example, between the language of return that shaped the Zionist discourse – i.e. return to the 'Fathers Land', the 'Promised Land', to the roots and to the East – and the image seen and described in Israeli visual culture and literature of the new Israeli subject (aka Sabra) that possessed European features, such as blond hair and blue eyes (Shohat, 1989). Or the various tactical loopholes and actions used to build outposts and Israeli settlements in the West Bank with the support of the Israeli government and large parts of the Israeli public, despite it violating national law and international agreements (Weizman, 2007). Within an Israeli art context these contradictions were not necessarily perceived as undesirable, but rather as an inspiring ground from which to create a unique aesthetic language that defines the qualities, styles and contents of Israeli art (Zalmona, 2013). I will further elaborate on this contradictory model that has shaped the Israeli art discourse in the next chapter. Here I focus on identity and space construction in Modern Israeli art (1920s-1960s). This period is parallel to the first pioneering Zionist

immigration to the land of Israel and the early stages of the nation-state building. As such, I look at the production of the new Israeli subject in landscape paintings, the most popular art genres in Modern Israeli art (Manor, 2005[a]), and the way they express the contradictory relations between local-universal and East-West.

Figure 1. Reuven Rubin, *Tel Aviv*, 1923. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Museum.

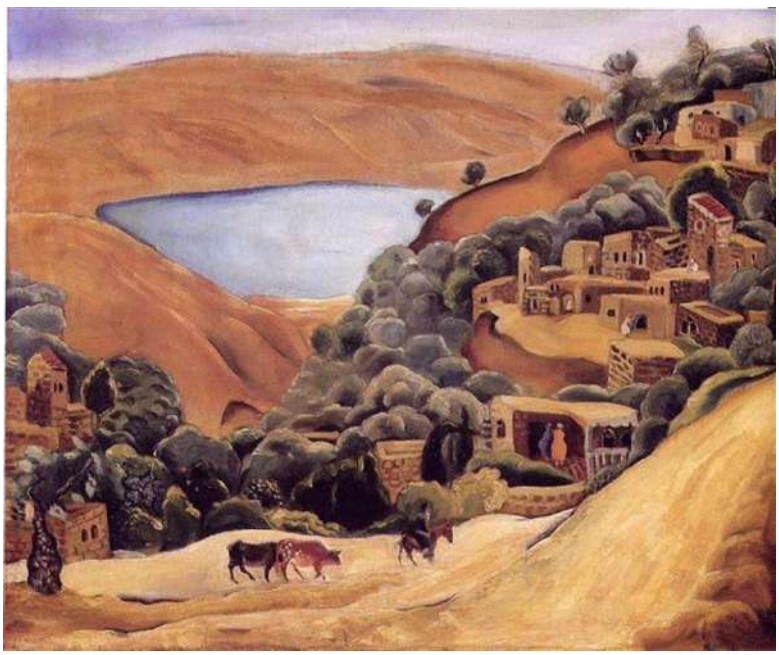

Figure 2. Nahum Gutman, *Tiberias Landscape*, 1928. Jerusalem: The Israel Museum.

When looking at the multiplicity of landscape paintings created between the 1920s and 1960s one can argue that they express the overwhelming sense of return or reterritorialisation with an old/new land. Reuven Rubin, for example, a Romanian-born Jewish, who immigrated to Ottoman Palestine in 1912, left for France, Romania and later on to New York then resettled again in British-Mandate Palestine in 1923 describes this feeling in his autobiography (cited in Zalmona, 2013: 44): “Romania was forgotten, New York far away…. In Palestine there was sunshine, the sea, the *halutzim* (pioneers) with their bronzed faces and open shirts, the Yemenite girls, the children with enormous eyes. A new country, a new life was springing up around me…. The world around became clear and pure to me. Life was stark, bare, primitive”. For Rubin (figure 1) and other Modernist Israeli artists, such as Nahum Gutman (figure 2), Sionah Tagger (figure 3) and Yosef Zaritsky (figure 4), landscape painting was a means to articulate a new sensory reality. The landscapes depicted in these paintings were diverse and included rural landscapes, Arab villages and ‘old’ cities, such as Jerusalem, Jaffa and Safed alongside new Jewish settlements, cities and agricultural fields. However, according to art historian Dalia Manor (2005[a]), modernist trends in Western art, such as Primitivism, Cubism and abstraction, were the main concerns of Israeli-Jewish artists and the main anchor from which the local landscape was treated. Moreover, the distant from the local landscape and its inhabitants was visible in the composition as well as the painter or the viewer remained distant from the landscape they chose to portray. When figures, usually unknown Arabs, were depicted in these paintings they were often shown from their back thus creating a close composition which

prevented the artist or viewer from fully getting to know these figure's reality and ways of life. This repeated formula, according to Manor (Ibid: 122), expresses the ways these painters "were so distant, geographically and mentally, from where [they] really were". Art historian and former chief curator Yigal Zalmona (2013: 43) add that the artists mentioned above saw "themselves as Westernerts souring in the East, a region whose principal merit lay in its biblical pedigree". The experience of the European Jewish artist in British-Mandate Palestine, who kept travelling and studying in Europe, is also expressed in the writings of the Bessarabian-born Jewish sculptor Avraham Melnikov (cited in Khinski, 2006: 409):

> Let's not be ashamed to confess the truth, nor wait for outsiders to announce it. Have we not been all ears to every sound emanating from there – from Europe? For we have longed for the European art magazine and have lived our life by it, and had it not been for the sea between us, we would have gone on pilgrimage to Paris. Who among us does not dream of the French 'Mecca'?

Figure 3. Sionah Tagger, *At Jaffa Port,* c.1926. Tel Aviv: Israel Phoenix Collection.

This type of attitude towards the West and the local landscape continues to shape identity-space relations in Israel nowadays. In culture, politics and economics, Israeli society has developed attachment and alliances with Western societies – mostly West and Central Europe and the U.S – while distinguishing itself from the Middle Eastern region. On several occasions, politicians and public figures have referred to Israel using colonial rhetoric, such as ‘villa in the jungle’ and ‘the only democracy in the Middle East’ (Benn 2013). Nowadays, Israel’s affiliation with Western references and values is mostly associated with processes of globalisation and neoliberalisation (Ram). However, as the following paragraphs show, processes of de-globalisation have also shaped the socio-political dynamics between the different ‘tribes’ in Israeli society, such as civil militarism and religious messianism and fundamentalism.

Figure 4. Yosef Zaritsky, *Jerusalem*, 1925. Tel Aviv: Collection of Joseph Hackmey.

2.1.2 The Decentralisation of the Israeli Subject and the Making of an Antagonist Society

Critical approaches to the Israeli-Jewish order gained prominence during the 1990s with the emergence of anti-status quo voices in history, sociology and politics. The present era is that of the 'post-' with more scholars adopting post-modern, post-Zionist, post-colonialist, and post-structuralist approaches alongside new critical voices such as feminist and queer lenses from which to analyse and critique the social, political and cultural structures of Israeli society. In contrast to the early positivist academic discourse which was recruited to the mission of nation-state building, the current discourse emphasised the state of Israel as a 'cleavage-based' society due to its multiple and overlapping national, ethnic, religious and class conflicts (Kimmerling, 2008: 31; Lissak and Horowitz, 1989).[43] The mounting criticisms of the police order emerging from these different fields highlight a crisis of values and laws within the Israeli-Jewish order (Morris, 2008; Pappé, 1997; Ram, 2008; Shalom Chetrit, 2004; Shohat, 1989). The analysis of this crisis varies but refers to the failure of the Israeli state to create a socialist and democratic state, Israel's inability to respond to social pressures and demographic changes, the discrimination of Israeli-Palestinians, the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories, and Israel's erasure of Palestinian heritage as well as Jewish diasporic histories and traditions (Ben Eliezer, 2004; Horowitz and Lissak, 1989; Yona, 1998).

[43] Scholars divide the production of knowledge within Israeli academia into three periods. The first was during the 1950s (positivist, paradigmatic, functionalist) which used the prism of the melting pot and the building of a nation as the main criteria of analysis; the second during the 1970s (Marxism, pluralism, feminism, colonialism) which focused on issues of labour, centre-periphery relationships, power and exploitation; and the third during the 1990s (globalisation, postmodernism) which dealt with issues of discourse, narrative, hegemony, canon, cultural practice, power relations, representation, and hybridisation (Ram, 2011).

This fragmentation of society is tied to the transformation of the police order in 1977, when the national-liberal Likud party came into power (Kimmerling, 2008). This moment gave birth to two trends. The first is the nationalisation of the Israeli state, a direction manifested through an expansion of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, a series of laws and bills that aimed to strengthen the Jewish characteristics of the Israeli state (which was formed to be both Jewish and democratic), a political discourse that emphasises security over peace, and a populist tone adopted by politicians from both the left and the right, such as expressions against Palestinians and asylum-seekers. The second direction is the neo-liberalisation of the Israeli economy and society since the 1980s. Through growing processes of privatising government services and public spaces, and adopting a market economy, Israel has moved away from the socialist order on which the state was built, towards a global and neo-liberal one. These directions led to two consequences which have influenced the formation of what Rivlin calls a 'tribal' society. The first is the failure of the 'melting pot' policy as a result of groups whose sensory reality was denied a place in the distribution of the sensible (Yona and Shenhav, 2005). The second is the deepening of socio-economic tensions between these groups (Adva Centre, 2016).

To describe this tension and the weakening of 'the common' amongst the different Israeli 'tribes', I use Mouffe's (1993) concept of antagonism. For Mouffe, antagonism refers to a conflict to which no rational solution can be applied (Ibid: 12; see also: Bishop, 2004: 65-67). Mouffe (1993: 2-3; 2005: 103, 192; 2008: 8) understands antagonism as a given, something that cannot be fully overcome. It arises as a result of the limited resources and

space in every society which cannot be equally distributed (Ibid). Within this context, politics becomes a conflict or a struggle over who gets to gain control over the distribution of the sensible. In a society that lacks a common language and values, antagonist politics makes relationships based on negotiation and compromise impossible, as it sees the 'other' as the enemy (Mouffe, 2000: 192). What Rivlin was describing in his speech was an antagonist reality in which the different 'tribes' in Israel take part in a survival game over political, symbolic and material power (Ram, 2011: 37). The reality of this separation is manifested through the aesthetics of each 'tribe', which distributes its own sensory reality through a separate media, educational system and geography, while minimising contact and interaction with the other 'tribes'. Despite the pessimistic image presented here, Rivlin's speech is a hopeful call for all the tribes to take part in a new partnership that will shape a "new Israeli order" (Ronen, 2018). What I take from this speech is Rivlin's acknowledgement of the contingent characteristics of the Israeli police order, which opens up the possibility for negotiation based on shared values and responsibilities.[44]

According to Mouffe (1993, 2008), what allows different groups of interest to co-exist together is the understanding that every order is the result of specific historical and social circumstances, which make the order temporary and relative. All orders are contingent. However, for Mouffe, the best prospects for a emergence of a radical or plural alternative within such a framework, rests on the possibility of replacing political antagonism with an agonistic

[44] "One thing is clear, the demographic processes that are reshaping Israeli society have in fact created "a new Israeli order," an order in which there are no longer a clear majority and clear minorities […] Whether we like it or not the make-up of the 'stakeholders' of Israeli society, and of the State of Israel, is changing in front of our eyes" (Ronen, 2018: 66).

approach that embraces difference and conflict as essential components of democracy. Agonism is a way to practice pluralism without turning the multiplicity of voices and interests into an antagonistic battle. Agonism thus makes democracy a game – in the sense that everyone who wishes to participate needs to follow its rules, which is the commitment to freedom and equality – that is never over, and never fully realised. The questions that are derived from such a model are practical. What is required from a society composed out of different groups of interests for it to be transformed from an antagonistic society into an agonistic one? And in relation to Rivlin's speech, how can a "new Israeli order" based on freedom and equality be achieved instead of the divisive and hierarchical system of the current national-neo-liberal order?

Apart from contingency, the model of radical and plural democracy assumes non-essentialist and unfixed qualities of human subjects, and emphasises the place of emotions and political passion that derive from "a strong identification with democratic values" (McNay, 2014: 85-86). Within contemporary art, especially in discussion around socially engaged and collaborative art practice, the affiliation with democratic values has gained a central place within art theory and practice (Bowman, 2016; Khonsari, 2009; Mouffe, 2008). This is a connection that was not only made by art practitioners and theorists, but also by scholars from other disciplinary fields who participated in the debates on the relations between art and politics. Mouffe (2008: 12), for example, in her critique on the lack of agonistic politics in liberal democracy refers to the significance of critical art that "foments dissensus, that make visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure

and obliterate. It is constituted by a manifold of artistic practices aiming at giving a voice to all those who are silenced".

The model of radical and plural democracy, with its element of contingency, agonism, and non-essentialist subjectivities that correspond to the aesthetic qualities discussed in the introduction (dissensus, creativity and emotions) is addressed here as an alternative sensory configuration which challenges the antagonist model of the Israeli 'four tribes' and the dominant national-neo-liberal order that frames it. This argument is demonstrated here by examining the types of collective subjectivities produced through the art collectives' projects. Using the aesthetic model of transversality I suggested in the introduction, I will explore other formations of communities that are not defined solely by national or ethnic identification – central categories in which groups in Israel are classified. Rather, the art collectives constitute new alliances, collaborations and communities which cross class, nationality and ethnic categories, and are based on values of shared labour, friendship and emotions such as empathy, solidarity and love. The art collectives use their status as (Israeli-Jewish) artists, as well as art's privileged position to construct democratic spaces which holds the promise of emancipation and equality – both in the political and the aesthetic regime of art. As the projects in discussion create moments and temporary spaces of dissensus, this chapter also addresses the challenges of producing new aesthetic communities within the limitations imposed by the Israeli police order.

2.2 Muslala's *The Meeting Point* (2012, 2013, 2015): Pluralism and Antagonism on the Borderline

The first case study is the Muslala collective and their projects *Between Green and Red – The Meeting Point* (2012, 2013), and *The Meeting Point – Under the Bridge* (2015). The projects consisted of a weekly multicultural festival held during the summers of 2012 and 2013 in Musrara neighbourhood, and then in 2015 in a different location in south Jerusalem. The festivals were framed around past events of social protest, civil disobedience and the struggle for peace and co-existence between Israeli-Jewish and Palestinian-Arabs. All three events were influenced by the watermelon shacks which were active during the 1970s, between the Old City and the western part of Jerusalem. It was a meeting point for Jews and Arabs to work and shop together, as well as to dance and watch films. Choosing to re-enact this event expressed Muslala's greater vision which is "to bring a sustainable change and ask questions on the role of the artist and social art within the urban space in general and Jerusalem specifically".[45] On the first two events of *Between Green and Red*, Muslala with the collaboration of Musrara residents and other volunteers, constructed a temporary watermelon stand, located between Musrara neighbourhood and the edge of the Old City.

Although it was considered a cultural and commercial success, the politics applied to the project by Muslala deepened the tension between the collective and Musrara residents, which eventually led to Muslala leaving the neighbourhood. I argue that although the sensory reality produced in the

[45] Muslala. [Online] Available at: <http://muslala.org/%D7%9E%D7%94-%D7%96%D7%94-%D7%9E%D7%95%D7%A1%D7%9C%D7%9C%D7%94/%D7%9E%D7%98%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%AA-%D7%94%D7%A2%D7%9E%D7%95%D7%AA%D7%94> [accessed 23 September 2018] [In Hebrew].

project was that of dissensus and affect, it confronted not only the police order – which was in part supportive of the project – but most importantly another sensory experience of the Jewish residents in Musrara. Using Mouffe's term, it produced antagonistic relations between Muslala collective and Musrara's residents over the material and symbolic resources of the Musrara neighbourhood. This section analyses the affective dynamic, as in the range of emotional and physical responses, between Muslala collective and Musrara residents. Following the collective leaving the neighbourhood, and what might be seem as the collective's failure to redistribute the sensible in the neighbourhood, the section ends with the resumption of the project in 2015. This took place under a bridge located between the Jewish neighbourhoods Katamonim and Pat, and the Arab neighbourhood Beit Safafa and was called *The Meeting Point – Under the Bridge*. In contrast to their first two years, there was full collaboration and support from residents of all three neighbourhoods. I argue that this change in location and organisation relates to the collective's self-criticism and reflection which allowed Muslala to make a shift after their crisis in Musrara neighbourhood. Yet the success of this event also raises questions regarding the conditions and possibilities in which a bi-national collaboration of this nature can occur.

2.2.1 Musrara – Where East and West Meet

As briefly outlined in the introduction, Musrara neighbourhood was built at the end of the 19th century by Muslim and Christian Palestinians from the middle and higher classes, who were part of the Palestinian community in Jerusalem. During the war in 1948, its residents were forced to leave their homes, and the neighbourhood was divided between Israel and Jordan

(figure 5).[46] After the war, Jewish Musrara became a neighbourhood for Jewish immigrants who arrived mostly from North African countries. The new residents of Musrara lived in terrible conditions. The housing units were small, it was difficult to warm them during the winter, and humidity led to diseases. In comparison to other neighbourhoods in Jerusalem, there was minimal budget for renovating the infrastructures of Musrara. A third of the family providers were unemployed and those who worked earned below the average income of an Israeli-Jewish family. Only half the youth in the neighbourhood went to school and none of the residents were in higher education institutions. Alongside the social and educational hardships, the neighbourhood was located exactly on the borderline between Israel and Jordan, and surrounded by a wire fence, a concrete wall, a minefield and sniper standpoints (Aharon-Gutman, 2016; Shalom Chetrit, 2004).

[46] Out of a population of between 850,000 - 900,000 Palestinians, around 700,000 Palestinian fled their homes during 1948 without permission to return. Around 400 Palestinian villages were destroyed and Palestinian neighbourhoods were resettled with a Jewish population (Ram, 2011: 5).

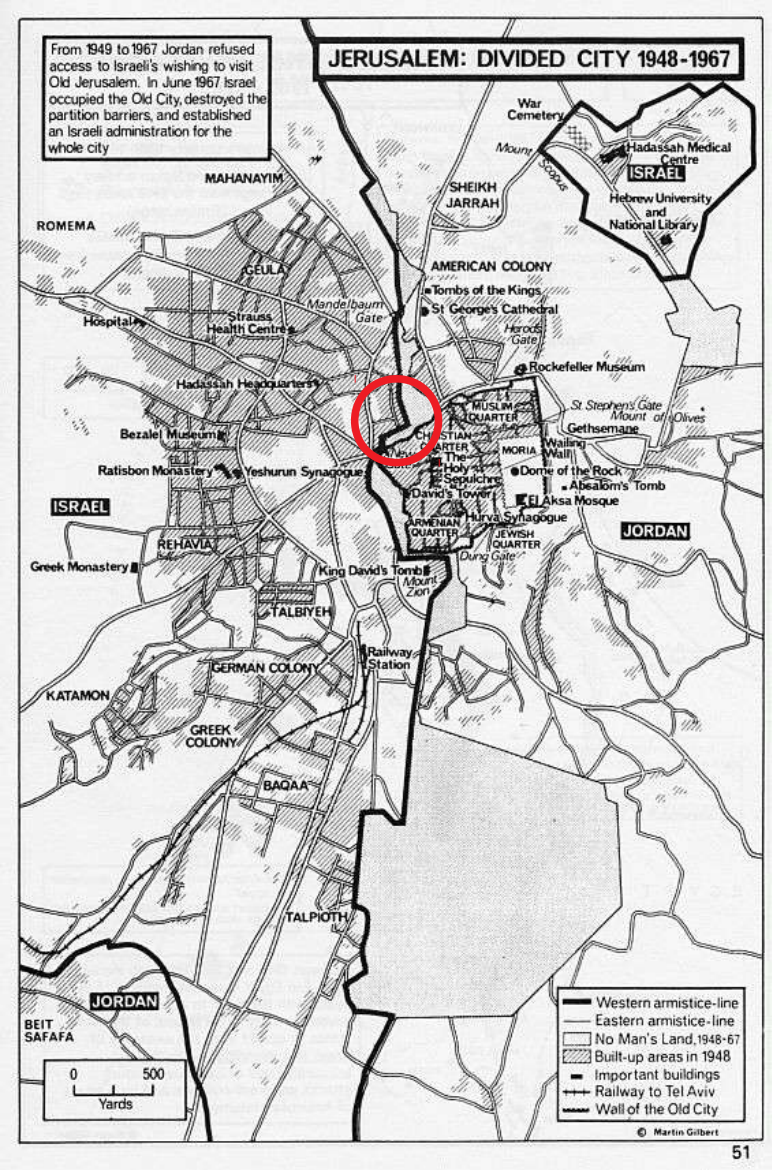

Figure 5. Martin Gilbert, 2008, Jerusalem: Divided City 1948-1967. In The Routledge Historical Atlas of Jerusalem, Abnigdon: Routledge [Musrara neighbourhood is circled in red, M.C.].

Even after the 1967 war, which for Israel symbolised the breaking down of walls and the unification of Jerusalem, Musrara was a low priority. Ongoing neglect by the city authorities, unemployment and poverty, especially in light of the economic growth the Ashkenazi middle class was enjoying, eventually led to the establishment of The Black Panthers movement in 1971. It

consisted of neighbourhood youths who were influenced by the civil rights movement in the US, and especially the Black Panther movement. It is considered the first civil disobedience movement in Israel and holds an unprecedented role in determining the social and cultural agendas of future struggles and modes of organisation in Israel (Shalom Chetrit, 2004). However it was not solely a class struggle, since it was connected to the protesters' ethnicity, and argued that the unequal distribution of resources was based on the residents' places of origin. From the 1980s, Musrara stopped being considered a distressed neighbourhood, as a result of the Israeli Project Renewal of regenerating and renovating distressed neighbourhoods. It was also the beginning of several waves of gentrification which also influenced demographic changes in the neighbourhood. Today the neighbourhood is mixed. Added to the Arab-Jewish families still living in Musrara, academics, artists and students – mostly Ashkenazi Jews – live there as well. In addition, there is a growing population of Haredi Jews, as Musrara is adjacent to the Haredi neighbourhood of Mea Shearim which became overcrowded. There is also a small non-Jewish African community, mostly from Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan. Palestinians still live in the eastern part of Musrara. Both parts are separated from each other by an acoustic wall and a highway (figure 6) (Aharon-Gutman, 2016).

Figure 6. Musrara Today. The Broken lines are the former 1948-1967 Israel-Jordan Armistice Border. Google Maps.

In 2012, the Muslala collective organised the first event of *Between Green and Red – A Meeting Point*, which they followed with a second event during summer 2013. Both took place in an abandoned space between Musrara neighbourhood, the Notre Dame monastery, and the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem. *Between Green and Red* was a collaboration between Musrara residents, the Musrara community administration, and the Muslala collective. The event was inspired by the watermelon shacks which were erected on the borderline between east and west Jerusalem during the 1970s. This borderline existed between 1948 to 1967, and separated the parts of Jerusalem controlled by the Israelis on one side and the Jordanian parts on the other side. The no man's land mentioned in the quotation used to be a demilitarised zone between Israel and Jordan, on the edge of the old city between west and east Musrara. After Israel won the Six Days War in 1967 – in what is considered to be Israel's national euphoric era of cultural and economic blooming until the outbreak of Yom Kippur war in 1973 – this no man's land became a meeting point between the two parts of the city (Shalom Chetrit, 2004). According to Reuven Abergel (Muslalaatrex, 2012[c]:

1:12-1:30), a former Musrara resident and one of the members of the Black Panthers movement, these watermelon shacks emerged spontaneously and organically by the residents of Muslala and the Old City, Jews and Arabs, who were childhood friends: “you had there something like ten Basta [stalls or shacks in the market, in Arabic also used in Hebrew] with separation and chairs outside, with music at night and tea and coffee and Hafla [a celebration in Arabic] in Arabic every night, and it was a huge happening day by day, day by day, until the municipality ended it”. This historical meeting point ran without any formal permission until the end of the 1980s, when an expansion of Road One that connects Jerusalem and Tel Aviv was paved into this no man’s land (Aharon-Gutman, 2016). In Abergel’s opinion (Muslalaatrex, 2012[c]: 1:30-1:40), it was due to the “political systems that did not like this connection of the Arab-Jewish partnership”.

Between Green and Red therefore, had two goals. The first was to re-enact a radical moment in which national boundaries were blurred and residents took initiative in the space they lived. The second was to create a contemporary cultural meeting point for the different groups living in the city. The tension between these two goals, deriving from the socio-political changes which occurred in Israel and especially in Jerusalem since the original watermelon shacks, stood at the centre of the antagonist relationship between the Musrara community administration and the Muslala collective.

2.2.2 Between Green and Red – a Cultural Meeting Point

2.2.2.1 The Architectural Plan

The first architectural plan for *Between Green and Red* (2012) was designed by the architect David Behar Perahia (figure 7). The plan was inspired by

archive images of the watermelon shacks in Jerusalem prior to 1948. Another important source of information were interviews Behar Perhaia conducted with senior residents of Musrara, most notably Koko Drey, one of the members of the Black Panthers movement and the only one of them who stayed in Musrara (Muslalaatrex, 2012[b]: 0:52-2:15):

> Every time we went out as young adults we finished the night at the watermelon shacks. It provided for us the best form of entertainment and leisure. You eat watermelon and meet people you have never met. People from all around the country came because vibes were good. It is difficult to explain it if you did not experience it. If today you will reminisce this time to someone who was there you will fill him with pleasure. And all of this happened within a reality of a great poverty. This was some kind of a precious stone for us. A place that softens all the difficulty in life.

Figure 7. Muslala, *Between Green and Red,* 2012, architectural plan. Between Green and Red's Facebook page (22 July, 2012).

Drey's memories illustrate two matters which are discussed here. The first is the place of emotions – in this case, feelings of nostalgia, longing and pleasure – in constituting relationships between subjects, objects and spaces (Ahmed, 2004: 9-10). In the case of *Between Green and Red* emotions are the starting point of the project which aimed to circulate the emotional reactions produced in the original watermelon shacks, and construct new

surfaces which define new subjectivities and intersubjective relationships. The second matter, which I will further develop in the next chapter, is the place of oral history in producing new knowledges and universes of references and values which challenge the distribution of the sensible. For the purpose of constructing 'the meeting point' Muslala released an open call which brought dozens of volunteers, alongside Musrara residents. Together they started collecting materials from construction sites and bins, such as furniture, coffee, and spice sacks for shading, wood rafters, iron wires and nails for the structures. The process of collaborative work expressed Behar Perahia's (Muslala, 2018: 140) only condition for participating in this project, where the act of building *Between Green and Red* was to be in itself an art practice. The construction of the project then was not just to let nostalgic memories circulate, but to produce new memories through the act of joining and working together.

Figure 8. Muslala, *Between Green and Red,* 2012, construction. Between Green and Red's Facebook page (23 July, 2012).

The process of constructing *Between Green and Red* was well documented on the Muslala facebook pages (the general one and others dedicated to the

project each year) and on their YouTube page (figures 8-9). It was a way of distributing the activity and expanding its participants, but it also highlighted the importance of producing new images of shared labour and collaboration, which manifested Muslala's vision of the project. There was emphasis on encouraging people to not just visit the project when it was completed, but to take part in its construction. One of the ways to do this was through the Muslala carpentry workshop. Under the guidance of Behar Perhaia, participants with all levels of expertise were invited to make furniture for *Between Green and Red*, mostly wood and straw chairs. After the project was over they could take the furnitures they had built away with them. The workshop then became another important working site to circulate emotions as well as generate skills and knowledge. According to Kester (2011: 80, 86-87), workshops are common in socially engaged and collaborative practices, as an alternative to the studio where the solo artist produces their work and then shows it to the world when the piece is ready. In addition to a working space, the workshop is also a centre for cultural exchange between all of those who participated in the project. Based on Ahmed's model of sociality of emotions, the transversal elements of the workshop allowed for producing objects that are embedded with new meanings and emotions which will later on be circulated in the events of *Between Green and Red*.

Figure 9. Muslala, *Between Green and Red,* 2012, construction. Between Green and Red's Facebook page (22 July, 2012).

The final structure of *Between Green and Red* was designed in the shape of half an oval (figures 10-11). In the centre there was a big plaza where people could sit and dance. One side of the structure was connected to the wall of the Notre Dame monastery. A part of this wall became an art wall curated by Nasrin Najar. The entrance of *The Meeting Point* faced east towards Damascus Gate as an invitation for everyone to come and join in. The oval structure itself was made out of wood and jute cloths, and was divided into seven open spaces that were connected by halls and corridors where the watermelons were placed. As part of Muslala's sustainable vision, *Between Green and Red* was an ecological project. Muslala avoided using any plastic and disposable tools for the building of the structure and the serving of food and drinks, and the watermelon leftovers were composted (Hasson, 2012; Muslala, 2018). These sustainable methods had already been used by Muslala and Musrara residents in the community garden in the neighbourhood, which was located on top of the workshop in the public

shelter, and most notably in their latest project *The Terrace* which will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

Figure 10. Muslala, Between Green and Red, 2012, opening night. Between Green and Red's Facebook page (31 July, 2012).

Figure 11. Muslala, *Between Green and Red,* 2012. On the right: the gallery wall. The Meeting Point's Facebook page (3 April 2013). Photo by Hamutal Wachtel.

2.2.2.2 The Opening Night

The construction of the first event of *Between Green and Red* (2012) took seven days (22.7 - 29.7) which was then followed by a six day festival which included live music, art, performances, storytellers, and, of course, a cold watermelons shack run by Drey. The event was free of charge and

dependent on funds, donations, volunteer work and income received by selling watermelon and drinks at low prices. Choosing the watermelon as a means to bring people together was appropriate. It is a refreshing summer fruit, its large size allows many people to share it, and it tends to get messy while eating, something that makes the act of eating it an enjoyable experience. The watermelon form was also adopted in the name and the logo for the event. *Between Green and Red* paraphrases with 'between east and west'. The watermelon is thus a meeting point where an encounter becomes possible. The logo – a red circle surrounded by a green stripe with three small white circles in the centre (figure 10) – corresponds with Nicholas Roeirch's Pax Cultura flag. Roeirch promoted the idea of protecting cultural objects and legacy during war times, prioritising their importance over military purposes. The flag he designed is hung in territories that hold cultural or historical significance thus suggesting a prohibition on destroying them (Muslala, 2018).

The opening night of *Between Green and Red* brought a big crowd, which was diverse and included the secular and religious, families, Musrara residents, and other participants from other neighbourhoods and cities (Muslalaatrex, 2012[b]). Most of the participants were Jews but there were Arabs from the Old City and East Jerusalem who attended as well, mostly young adults. The night was energetic and people were cheering and dancing throughout the entire evening. The singer Shlomit Buchnik and her band were the main show of the evening and played a medley of songs in Arabic, a musical genre Buchnik absorbed from a young age growing up with Libyan-Jewish parents. The presence of Arabic music is significant not just in

the context of highlighting the shared culture and language of Palestinian-Arabs and Arab-Jews, but also in the broader context of the struggle to acknowledge Arabic-Jewish history and culture. As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, the Israeli order was established on modern, Zionist and secular values, which rejected the Arab subject – the Palestinian and the Jewish. While Palestinians were considered to be the enemy, or citizens whose national collective subjectivity was not recognised, Jews who immigrated from Arab and Muslim countries were going through an inauguration process of becoming part of the Israeli collective. The means for integrating Arab-Jews within Israeli Jewish society was motivated by paternalism and co-option rather than equal partnership (Ram, 2011). In this situation, Arabic becomes a language to be taught for practical and security reasons, despite its status as the second official language of Israel, and the cultures of Arabic-Jews were appreciated as folklore, with its oriental music and rich cuisine, warm hospitality and traditional values (Shohat, 1989; Feder And Katz-Gerro, 2012).

It was not just Buchnik and her band that contributed to the dominant presence and celebration of Arabic music in both events of *Between Red and Green* (2012, 2013) and *The Meeting Point*. The event hosted other classical musicians, such as Nino Biton and the Maghreb Orchestra. During his youth, Biton one of the leading musicians of Algerian music in Israel, played in the original watermelon shacks of the 1970s, and was invited to play with the Maghreb Orchestra for the three events organised by Muslala. Moreover, the events provided space for contemporary music ensembles that often mixed Arabic musical genres with other musical influences, such

as A-WA and Liron Amram and the Panthers, who combine Yemeni-Jewish music with electronic dance beats; Neta Elkayam who writes and sings in Moroccan-Arabic; and other ensembles who demonstrate the polyphony of what is minimised under the category of ‘Arabic’ or ‘Oriental’ music such as Saffi Swaid and the Sajan band, Wast El Tarik, and the Arab-Jewish orchestra led by Taisser Elias. As with the watermelon, the music plays a double role as i) a means of re-enacting and retelling the past differently and giving it a more central place within the current order and ii) as a dissensual figure allowing for a transversal encounter to occur. According to Elliott, Silverman, and Bowman (2016: 4), music holds a kind of primal affect which promotes “constructive, prosocial, in-group behaviour; bonding; and group cohesion”. This affective quality and the choice of music genre appreciated by both Palestinian-Arabs and Arab-Jews helped to suspend fixed territories and ways of identification, and allow for a different collective sensory experience to be produced through devotion to the music.

Another highlight of the opening event was the Black Panthers reunion which was documented in a group picture (figure 12). It was not the first time Muslala had collaborated with the Black Panthers. One of their notable projects was the inauguration of *The Black Panthers Road* (2001) in Musrara neighbourhood which I discuss in the next chapter. This was a collaboration that was necessary to Muslala, especially when the relationships with the Musrara administration community had taken a hostile turn. It was a validation for the right of the collective to work and live in the neighbourhood, given by members of the protest movement from the 1970s which shaped the history and the way Musrara is remembered today. It was not just a

formal stamp, but also a relationship that was based on shared values and vision. Abergel expressed it during the opening night when he said on the stage: “keep on being happy. This connection is the right connection” (Muslalaatrex, 2012[a]).

Figure 12. Muslala, *Between Green and Red,* 2012. The Black Panthers Reunion. Between Green and Red’s Facebook page (31 July, 2012).

2.2.2.3 Between the First and the Second *Between Green and Red*

The sensory experience produced during the launch event was a transversal moment which held potential for revolutionary affects to be produced and to evolve beyond the confined and localised space in which they emerged. This experience gave rise to other forms of intensities expressed by some Musrara residents, and which were not anticipated by the Muslala collective. According to the collective (Muslala, 2018), disagreements between them and the Musrara community administration already existed prior to the event. They mostly had to do with the historical and political discourse Muslala brought to their artistic activity in the neighbourhood, for example through art tours which discussed the Palestinian origins of this neighbourhood and the reasons for their displacement. However, the critical moment that marked the

end of the collaboration on behalf of Musrara community administration was the mixed dancing between Jews and Arabs and the revolutionary affect it produced. After that night dances were not allowed throughout the rest of the festival. As a result of the overall success of the first *Between Green and Red* there was a mutual interest to organise a second one during summer 2013, as Muslala was hoping to transform the project into an annual summer tradition. Through a mediation process between Muslala and the Musrara community administration, led by representatives from the cultural department of Jerusalem City Hall, Muslala agreed to compromise on several issues: the advertisement of the event would be in Hebrew and English only, and not in Arabic as previously; Matan Israeli, a member of Muslala and the artistic director of the previous *Between Green and Red* would not take part in the construction of the site; and dances would be prohibited throughout the entire event (Ibid).

The images and footages of the second *Between Green and Red* (2013) might be misleading when it comes to understanding the tense atmosphere that surrounded the event.[47] Except for the almost complete lack of dancing, they depict a large happy crowd – even larger than the first one – continuing to eat watermelon and enjoying the good music. For its second year, the event received the Jerusalem City Hall permission and was part of the official summer programme of the "Jerusalem Culture Season". In addition to the City Hall support, and support from other organisations and local businesses, Muslala organised a crowdfunding campaign to collect enough funding not just for the current event but for future ones. The design of the site, made by

[47] See for example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_6_3HW7u9w [accessed 27 September 2019].

the architect and Musrara resident Alona Lifshitz, was also more ambitious and complex (figure 13). It was a two floor structure made out of wood, palm leaves, and a mix of mud and straw. There was a ramp leading to the second floor terrace. In the centre of the terrace there was a series of white flags attached to a wooden structure shaped like a clothes hanger. Underneath the terrace, in the covered area stood the watermelon shack. The opening event held a wedding ceremony between Jerusalem and its residents, as well as seven artist workshops. The programme was expanded and other events were added, such as three days of an alternative short film festival; a poetry and spoken word evening organised by the poetry group Ars-Poetica; an acrobalance workshop; and a fusion dance performance by the women's group Kadin. In addition, the event hosted the collective Empty House and their fourth project *The Convoy* (HaShayara in Hebrew) which I discuss in the next chapter.

figure 13. Muslala, *Between Green and Red,* 2013. The Meeting Point's Facebook page (30 July 2013).

The great success of the second event of *Between Green and Red*, with the larger number of organisations, volunteers and participants who collaborated

and supported it, could not reconcile the antagonist relationship between Muslala and the Musrara community administration. This relationship was perceived by the collective as crucial for them to keep working in the neighbourhood. During the summer of 2014 *Between Green and Red* did not take place. Another war broke out between Israel and Gaza – aka Operation Protective Edge – and a series of violent clashes in Jerusalem and the tense atmosphere made organising the project almost impossible. In addition, the horse police unit that was in charge of dispersing demonstrations made the abandoned site that Muslala used for the project their departure point. The carpentry workshop was evacuated from the public shelter, which was returned to its original purpose during the summer war. In 2015, the last year of the collective in Musrara neighbourhood, Muslala decided to relocate the third event in the series (Amir, 2016; Muslala, 2018).

2.2.2.4 "Before We Dance Together We Need To Know How To Sit Together" (Amir, 2016)

The dispute between the Musrara collective and the Musrara community administration can be understood in terms of a struggle over the distribution of the sensible, as well as the different positions each side took regarding the meaning of art and aesthetics. In fieldwork examining the relationship between Muslala and the Musrara community administration, the urban sociologist Meirav Aharon-Gutman (2016) shows how this dispute was fuelled by a feeling of being deceived. The repeated answer given by members of the Musrara community administration was that they trusted Muslala to create art, while Muslala made politics instead. The conflict then was a result of a misinterpretation of each side's intention. The Musrara community administration understood art as something that is detached from

politics, and as such, maintained the current order and improved its surface by using aesthetic means (public garden, urban art, cultural activities for kids). This position frames art within the ethical regime where there is a concordance between the sensory reality produced through art (*poiesis*) and "the complex forms of perception and emotion through which it is felt and understood" (*aisthesis*) (Rancière 2011: 60). However, the Muslala approach to art locates the collective within the aesthetic regime, where current sets of perceptions and emotions are suspended in favour of a new sensory reality. By producing encounters with the other - the Palestinians living in east Musrara – and promoting an understanding of a unified neighbourhood that is aware of the narrative of both sides, Muslala disturbed the police order and wished to redistribute the order of things. Yet, as Aharon-Gutman (Ibid) shows in her research, Muslala was not aware of the inherent conflict between these two approaches, especially when Muslala conditioned their work in Musrara on the residents' consent, a recognition that was also translated into budgeting and resources, such as receiving the public shelter as a working space. When gradual tensions emerged on the surface as a result of Muslala's activities – for example, organising an art tour in Musrara and including within it the Palestinian history of the neighbourhood – the Musrara community administration felt deceived and threatened by the collective. They became more suspicious and restless every time they were faced with a new project by Muslala – feelings that led them to ask each time whether it was art, what kind of art and most importantly, was this art by their side.

At the beginning of this chapter I referred to Mouffe's definition of antagonism as a struggle over resources, spaces and narrative, which resulted from the inability to equally distribute them within a society of plural interests and needs. According to Mouffe (1993: 7; 2008: 9; see also McNay, 2014: 75), this type of plurality is different from that of liberalism, as it is based on the struggle of marginal groups against inequality and exclusion. What is seen here as the struggle of two antagonist groups, is the self-identification of each group which affirmed their status of seeking to fight against inequality and exclusion. According to Israeli (cited in Amir, 2016: online) "we [Muslala] were some kind of an underground, also literally, because we worked in the shelter under the ground, and also because of the questions we raised, such as no man's lands, neighbourliness and complicated history, these are question that are taboo in Musrara". By adopting underground and risk-taking qualities, Muslala took the position of a political subject. However, in the eyes of the Musrara community administration, this position confronted their own sensory reality which held its own struggle with visibility and inclusion. From the position of the director of the Musrara community administration, Muslala was the group holding the power, as a result of their educational background and their extended presence and influence in the neighbourhood (Aharon-Gutman, 2016). Muslala became another body who represented Musrara. It received the public shelter and budget from the City Hall and most crucially, it organised tours which depicted the multi-layered and complex history of Muslala. While it included the hardships of Jewish residents who arrived in Musrara after 1948, and the struggle of the Black Panthers, it also mentioned

Musrara being a Palestinian neighbourhood from which its residents were forced to flee.

Even when Muslala collaborated with members of The Black Panthers from Musrara, each group understood The Black Panthers' legacy differently. The director of the Musrara community administration argued that The Black Panthers' struggle was motivated by the basic need to bring food to the table (Aharon-Gutman, 2016: 106). In other words, it was a struggle over material redistribution, but one that occurred within the national limits of the police order. This perception can be doubted when looking at the Black Panthers' statements and political activity. From an early stage the Black Panthers went beyond issues of local demands to discuss the actual structure of the Israeli order. These discussions were influenced by radical left discourse, and especially of activists from the Israeli communist organisation Matzpen (compass in Hebrew) who left the organisation to support the Black Panthers' struggle (Shalom Chetrit, 2004: 140). This radical and inclusive approach was a main pillar of the Black Panthers and which, according to Abergel, disappeared in many current Mizrahi struggles (Muslalaatrex, 2012[c]: 2:55-3:56). However, regardless of what might be a more correct interpretation of the Black Panthers movement and legacy, the Musrara community administration's perception of them highlights that the antagonist struggle in the Musrara neighbourhood as presented by current residents of Musrara is one that accepts the current order. This is where a transversal and unfixed sensory experience is confronted with a territorialised assemblage of enunciation. It demonstrates one of the challenges of achieving unfixed and non-essentialist forms of identification, as theorist Lois McNay argues in her

ontological criticism of radical democracy, as it occurs within a specific socio-political context where subjects are already “embedded in ways of living” (McNay, 2014: 81).

While the conflict between Muslala and the Musrara community administration took the form of a materialist, symbolic and physical struggle, it is not surprising that the last straw was a threat expressed through the bodily encounter of mixed dancing. According to Ahmed’s (2004: 62) understanding of the emotion of fear it is not the actual touch between bodies that is responsible for the feeling of being under threat or in danger, but rather “past histories of associations” which produce the bodily separation between ‘us’ and ‘them’. In a broader historical Jewish context, it can be understood as the fear of assimilation and persecution that have shaped the boundaries between Jews and non-Jews, a fear that was later on circulated in the production of physical and mental separation between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians. In several post-event reflections, Muslala members discussed the inevitable tensions arising from this combination of allowing a space to dance between Palestinian young adults coming from religious homes, many of them never having danced with girls before, and the senior residents from Musrara who came from religious and traditionalist homes, and supported the separation between east Musrara and west Musrara. It is important to note that other dancers did not mind the mixed dancing, yet throughout the event the aim was to deepen the collaboration between Muslala and Musrara residents who saw this type of encounter as absolutely prohibited (Aharon-Gutman, 2016: 108-110; Amir, 2016: online). According to Israeli, the mixed dancing produced a dissensual moment of crossing borders which Muslala

did not know how to approach, and therefore should take responsibility (Amir, 2016: online).

Interestingly enough, the counter-struggle of the Musrara community administration to Muslala was through aesthetic means. Parallel to the Muslala intervention in space, there was a series of interventions that confronted and even vandalised the space as distributed by Muslala. For example, a pomegranate tree that was planted in the Muslala community garden was uprooted, signs in Arabic that were hung by the collective were taken down, graffiti depicting the face of the first Likud leader who became prime minister in 1977, Menachem Begin, was spread around the neighbourhood, alongside another graffiti in one of the segments of the acoustic wall separating west and east Musrara saying “Muslala out” (Aharon-Gutman, 2016: 93-94). Lastly, it was the refusal of Musrara residents to participate in any activity that Muslala organised that put an end to it. Once the neighbourhood denied the sensory reality suggested by the collective there was no place for collaboration. According to critic and curator Lee Weinberg (2018: 194), these acts reflect the emancipatory process of Musrara residents who once again transformed into political subjects to reclaim their public space. In that sense the role of Muslala in the neighbourhood was over.

2.2.3 *The Meeting Point – Under the Bridge* (2015) – Between Coexistence to Co-resistance

Another important matter that prevented *Between Green and Red* from truly becoming a meeting point was the lack of Palestinian collaboration. Apart from individual Palestinians who came to the events, there was not a

representative body, such as the Musrara community administration, to participate in the organisation and distribution of the event. This has to do with the difficulty of finding a Palestinian partnership in east Jerusalem, especially for events that are supported and (partially) sponsored by the Jerusalem municipality. According to a report published by the NGO Ir Amim (City of Nations in Hebrew; 2015), the Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, an area that was annexed by Israel in 1967, feel distrust towards Jerusalem municipality. This feeling is the result of a discriminatory policy towards East Jerusalem which is manifested through the confiscation of territories in favour of Jewish settlements and national parks, the separation of several east Jerusalem neighbourhoods with the construction of the wall, and minimal municipal services in education, employment, infrastructure and transportation and the absence of law enforcement. Within this context an artistic event, such as the one organised by Muslala, which is partially supported by Jerusalem municipality, can be seen as a cultural washing. The lack of collaboration from the Palestinian side meant that Muslala was unable to foresee difficulties that might influence how they carried out the event. For example, the decision to run *Between Green and Red* during the time of the Ramadan, so Palestinians could go to the meeting point to break their fast. Despite good intentions, Muslala did not realise that Ramadan is a holiday where families come together to feast, which explains the lack of participation from older Palestinians (Amir, 2016). As part of the self-reflective process which came as the result of leaving the Musrara neighbourhood, Muslala did not compromise on both Israeli and Palestinian collaboration in the next meeting point event in 2015.

The Meeting Point – Under the Bridge was the last attempt (to date) to revive *Between Green and Red* in a different location while learning from past mistakes. It is possible to argue that *The Meeting Point – Under The Bridge* (2015) was a re-enactment of *Between Green And Red* rather than a continuation of it. *The Meeting Point* was detached from its original place and the context which gave it its legitimation. Yet it continued its overall aesthetics while relocating to examine its relevance. The new location shared a similar history with that of Musrara – under a bridge in the junction of the Jewish neighbourhoods Pat and Katamonim, and the Palestinian neighbourhood Beit Safafa in the south of Jerusalem. Pat and Katamonim were both distressed neighbourhoods originally populated by Arab-Jewish immigrants during the 1950s. The lack of proper infrastructure and housing led to several artistic and activist practices which I will elaborate on in the next chapter. Until today, most of its residents were from a low-medium socio-economic background. Beit Safafa had been divided into two parts between 1948 and 1967, and was reunited as part of Israeli territories after the 1967 war. Its residents – Christian and Muslim Palestinian-Arabs – are Israeli citizens. Next to the bridge that is located between these neighbourhoods, there is a bilingual school for Arab and Jewish children in Israel. In comparison to both sides of Musrara, Pat, Katamonim and Beit Safafa maintain a good neighbourly relationship and even joined together for several successful environmental campaigns to prevent the expansion of the highway route, and maintaining local nature and wildlife.

The relationships in the area prior to the arrival of Muslala, as well as the collaboration with educational, cultural and communal bodies from all the

neighbourhoods had a positive impact on the way the event was received. First, the event took place prior to Ramadan which allowed for a more diverse crowd of Israelis and Palestinians to participate. Second, the location of *The Meeting Point* is part of a park, which was built instead of the highway, yet this particular area was left neglected with construction and garbage waste and malicious graffiti, mostly against Arabs and the bilingual school. Similarly to *Between Green and Red*, the new project was part of a greater festival – this time it was the Israel Festival for Multidisciplinary Art held every summer in Jerusalem. *The Meeting Point* also had international partners – the architecture department in the Technical University of Berlin under the supervision of Christophe Barlieb. The working process was similar to *Between Green And Red*: dozens of volunteers worked together to build the new meeting point – a two storey wooden structure under the concrete bridge, with floors connected via a ramp and stairs. The first floor held the watermelon shack alongside other food and crafts stands, and the second floor was where people sat and danced (figures 14-15). Alongside Jewish-Arabic music and middle-eastern jam sessions and concerts, other activities took place, such as a theatre-mask workshop with the pupils from the adjacent schools, poetry reading, tours around the area, and workshops such as jewellery making, Palestinian embroidery and bookbinding.

Figure 14. Muslala, *Under the Bridge,* 2015. Mualala's Facebook page (10 June 2015).

The harmonious atmosphere of *The Meeting Point* was able to touch many of the participants. It was mostly prominent amongst some of the Israeli-Jewish kids since *The Meeting Point* was their first time encountering Palestinians (Muslala, 2018: 141). On this account, I can testify to a moment where I arrived at *The Meeting Point* as a tutor in the education centre nearby with several other crew members and around 15 kids. The kids looked tense and did not leave our sight. After a while we had watermelon slices in one of the corners, and some of them took initiative and gave the leftovers to other participants. Every now and then they returned to us exhilarated and described their encounters to us. This moment of dissensus which the kids were experiencing, of withdrawing from their everyday environment into a new sensory reality that encounter with the other is made possible, highlights the significance of such events which, according to my former colleague Maayan Litay (Ibid: 161), opened the possibilities for them "to dream and build an ambitious project in an abandoned space even for one day". Nevertheless, *The Meeting Point* demonstrates the limitations of these temporal spaces within a reality of a continuous conflict, occupation and oppression. The last meeting point event was made possible because there were no politics and revolutionary affects involved, as opposed to the

Meeting Point events that took place in Musrara neighbourhood. In Musrara it was not only the physical contact which held the potential for political subjectivisation but also the legacy of the Black Panthers movement that was largely present in the content of the event. It exposed the contingency of the current Israeli police order by pointing out other historical moments when a different distribution of the sensible was possible. The last event of the *Meeting Point*, however, maintained the element of pluralism without the antagonism which ended with Muslala being rejected and expelled from Musrara neighbourhood. It enabled its participants, mostly Israeli-Jews, to come to contact with the culture and the physical presence of the 'other', i.e. the Palestinian, without the sensorial clash that challenges the distribution of the sensible from which they benefit. Returning to the theoretical framework of this chapter, the case of Muslala demonstrates some of the practical challenges concerned with practising pluralism within an antagonist society, and the delicate line between achieving agonism and (re)producing antagonism. It also illustrates the continuous navigation between consensus and dissensus, coexistence and co-resistence which galvanised the collective act. As for Muslala, *The Meeting Point*, was both the end of an era and the beginning of a new search for a new aesthetic community.

Figure 15. Muslala, *Under the Bridge,* 2015.Mualala's Facebook page (12 June 2015).

2.3 Empty House*, Kibbutz DIY* (2013)*:* The Art of Collective Labour

In the discussion on Muslala *Between Green and Red* (2012, 2013) and *The Meeting Point* (2015), I mentioned the collective's emphasis on the collaborative working process that was no less important than the launching of the project. The element of shared labour is central in collaborative and socially engaged practices, as it relates to the construction of new surfaces from which new collective subjectivities emerge through the act of working together. For this discussion, I will focus on Empty House *Kibbutz DIY* (2013) in which a model of a Kibbutz was constructed in Jerusalem for short period of time. The Kibbutz is one of the forms of Jewish settlements built in British-Mandate Palestine since the beginning of the 20th century by young Zionist Jews immigrating from Europe.[48] The model of the Kibbutz is based on communal and socialist values and places agriculture as the central form of labour. By adopting the notion of the Kibbutz, Empty House presented a different model and vision for a collaborative practice, using different

[48] The literal meaning of Kibbutz is gathering or assembling.

universes of references than that of Muslala. The main goal of *Kibbutz DIY* – and the Empty House mission in general – is to build a cultural home for the creative community living in Jerusalem. To discuss the creation of an aesthetic community in *Kibbutz DIY*, I will frame the project within a different context, relating to totemic objects within the Israeli-Jewish narrative, and the ways they are challenged within critical art discourse. As *Kibbutz DIY* is about bringing into life an ideal as well as a historical form, I will also connect the project to general discussion on re-enactment within participatory art.

Figure 16. Empty House, *Kibbutz DIY*, 2013. An Open Call. Empty House's website page.

2.3.1 The Kibbutz Is Calling You!

> Again I go up to Jerusalem. I felt today as if it was the first time I arrived to the city. Opposite to my eyes the same naked mountains, the same empty fields and the same thought troubling the heart: how to revive these mountains, how to plant trees in them. I am happy that the wilderness has persevered, it must be because our land has expected us (Empty House, 2012[a]: online).

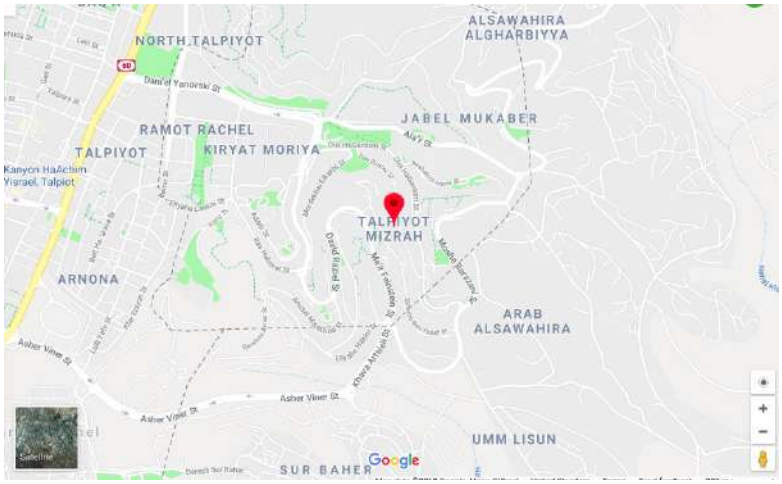

figure 17. Google Maps, 2018. *Armon Hanatziv (Talpiyot Mizrah) neighbourhood, Jerusalem.*

This quotation was placed on one of the open call posters for Empty House *Kibbutz DIY* inviting people to take part in building and living in a Kibbutz (figure 16). This quotation was taken from the diary of Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi in 1919. Ben-Zvi was an educator, author and agronomist who built an educational farm in what is today the Armon HaNetziv neighbourhood in east Jerusalem (figure 17). According to historical research conducted by Empty House, the educational farm was active between the end of the 1920s until 1948. The goal of the farm was to train Jewish girls for agricultural work. The farm included a nursery for ornamental, fruit, and forest trees, a vegetable garden, chicken coops, beehives, and a dairy barn. At the end of the 1930s the British authorities built another structure next to the farm that was part of the Arabic college, which shared a similar goal of training Arab girls for agriculture. Ben-Zvi's vision was to give girls the knowledge and training to cultivate the land, as well as to build their socialist consciousness through collaborative work (figure 18). In 1948, the farm moved to a different location in Jerusalem, yet the area was still used for agricultural purposes, mostly run by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem until 1967. During that time, the area

was considered a demilitarised zone under the supervision of the UN. The farm area was located inside ‘the green line’ - the recognised border of the Israeli territories signed during the 1949 Armistice Agreements between Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon – and on the Israeli part of the demilitarised zone. Yet after the area was annexed in 1967 a new Israeli-Jewish neighbourhood called Armon Hanatziv or east Talpiot was built and considered by the international community to be an illegal settlement. At that time the farm was abandoned and the territory remained an open space owned by the Israel Land Authority. For a long time there were efforts by the Council for Sites Conservation to declare the area a historical and nature site, and revive the educational farm, as one of the plans by the Israel Land Authority is to change the designation of the area into a hotel district. According to one of the Empty House members, the area is currently being flattened and a hotel is due to be built (Empty House, 2012[b]).

Figure 18. Empty House, Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi (second from the Right) and the Educational Farm, 1928. In Empty House, 2012[a].

Kibbutz DIY can be understood in terms of a re-enactment, that is the practice of re-performing or re-doing artworks and real-life events as a means to reflect, critique and explore a real or imagined form of life (Ben-Shaul, 2016; Schneider, 2011). Re-enactment, as Schneider (2011: 4) puts it, is "a battle concerning the future of the past". At the same time re-enactment – when it involves a critical and reflective revision of the past – is concerned with the present as it becomes an act of survival, teaching us how to keep ourselves alive (Ibid).[49] I briefly described Muslala's *Between Green and Red* (2012, 2013) as a re-enactment of a historical moment of collaboration between two national groups. It involved both retelling the past, emphasising untold local and marginal histories, and re-contextualising the moment as a reference tool for learning how to get along in the present. Both aspects were given equal importance as the project was divided into two parts – the constructing of the project, and the launch of *Between Green and Red* event. The re-enactment performed by Empty House in *Kibbutz DIY* is different in two ways. First, the Kibbutz is one of the symbols on which the Zionist narrative is built. As the quote at the beginning of the section shows, the Kibbutz is connected to other Zionist values of pioneering, communal life, agricultural and labouring work, and conquering the wilderness. Second, the core element of the Empty House projects is the process of planning and construction which takes several weeks to months, rather than the final result, when it is open for a few days of events for the public. For *Kibbutz*

[49] The re-enactments in discussion are re-enactments within an art context. In contrast, historical re-enactments aim for the most accurate and detailed performance. They are often understood as a patriotic act, such as the case with historical battle re-enactments (Schneider, 2011).

DIY the construction took three months including the last week in which the space was open to the public.

The relationship of Empty House *Kibbutz DIY* with the past, and the utilisation of the past to produce a new aesthetic assemblage, is the centre of discussion here. To understand this relationship I examine the ways in which Empty House addressed the concept of the Kibbutz and its historical implementation.

2.3.2 On Totems and the Question of Critical Art

The Kibbutz can be understood as a totemic form. Totems are forms or figures of representation that serve the police order, as well as give it its shape. Based on Deleuze and Guattari's theory (Holland, 2013: 72), totems (which can take the form of a human, an animal, a sign, a territory, a structure) bring groups together as they manifest "the intensification of the force" associated with the territorialised assemblage of enunciation. Totems provide a unified embodiment of what is sacred, respected and valued in a certain group. The totems' status then legitimatise the use of force by the police order, and hide the power relations upon which the police order was established. The power possessed by the police order is then granted to totems, which, in return, can distribute the territorialised assemblage even when the group members associated with the totems live apart from them – for example, with the case of religion or nationality.

While other forms of commune and agriculture were already established by the end of the 19th century, the first Kibbutzim were built during the 1920s, mostly by young Eastern European Jews who arrived during the second

wave of Jewish immigration to Ottoman Palestine (1904-1914). As Jewish immigration and land purchasing increased, so did the tension and clashes between the Arab and Jewish population. Most notable were the 1929 Palestinian riots (“Meora’ot Tarpat” in Hebrew), the result of an on-going dispute between Muslims and Jews over Jewish access to the Western Wall in Jerusalem. The riots led to casualties in Jewish communities, mostly in Jerusalem, Hebron and the Galilee – the most populated areas by Jews prior to the emergence of the Zionist movement – as well as property damage. The other event was the Arab Uprising of 1936-1939 which was mostly aimed against the British-Mandate forces and the Zionist project. These tensions increased the residential, economic and cultural separation between Jews and Arabs. In Kibbutzim, for example, this showed in the form of a new model of construction called ‘Wall and Tower’ (Homa U’Migadl in Hebrew). These Kibbutzim were erected overnight without permission from the authorities. However, a law from the Ottoman Empire that was adopted by the British-Mandate force prevented illegal constructions from being demolished if the roof had been completed (Rotbard, 2003). Other strategies of separation was the organisation ‘the Watchman’ (HaShomer in Hebrew) which was active between 1909-1920. It provided protection services to the Jewish settlements, as a way to become less dependant upon the protection services given by local and non-Jewish watchmen (Ram, 2011). The combination of the Zionist pioneer worker and guardian was depicted in posters and photographs portraying the images of muscular Jewish pioneers (Zalmona, 2013). They become popular from the 1930s as the Zionist movement, under the leadership of the labour movement, prepared to move

towards the nation-building phase. They were commissioned and distributed in British-Mandate Palestine and in Europe, and soon became the symbol of the era (figures 19-20). The Kibbutz and the Jewish pioneers became one of the totems of the Israeli-Jewish order. They not only signified the national collective effort of building and protecting the home, but they also represented the socialist values on which the Israeli state was founded. It is a nostalgic symbol of the ‘good old’ Israel and perhaps the reason why it has remained relevant even after governmental and ideological changes within the Israeli police order.

Figure 19: Otte Wallish, *Poster for the Jewish National Fund*, c1930. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Museum of Art; Gift of Eri Wallish.

The emergence of critical art discourse during the early 1990s aimed at revising the role of the Israeli-Jewish order's totems. The critical discourse contextualised the narrative of the establishment of the Israeli state within a theoretical framework that explored the coloniser/colonised power relationship, ideology and hegemony, as well as institutional critique of the Israeli art field. Moreover, it shed light on the critical use of totemic forms by contemporary Israeli artists. According to theorist and art critic Ariella Azoulay

(1992: 103-105), the totem is a representation of power that occupies the space and defines it permanently (structures, monuments) and temporally (ceremonies, rituals). Totems serve as inspectors of the police order, the subjects who participate in its relationships with society as a whole. Within the Israeli context, one can find totems in the form of the flag and borders, in the form of collective assemblages such as the army, the nation and the family, within national and religious symbols such as the star of David, the Menorah, the Sabra, and with concepts such as home (national home, homeland, the holy temple).[50] As part of the aesthetic regime of art, these totems have also been the subject of criticism, delegitimisation and re-contextualisation by Israeli artists since the 1960s and 1970s, but more dominantly and visibly during the 1980s. Azoulay (Ibid) understands the critical act as one that exposes, maps, deciphers and points out the sensible represented in the totem, and the police order that allows the sensible to exist on behalf of other sensory realities. The questions she raises then are: what are the ways in which the artwork treats totems, and what is the mechanism that constitutes these totems?

[50] In Hebrew the holy temple is literary translated to the house temple (Beit HaMikdash).

Figure 20: Zoltan Kluger, *Workers Marching to Work at the Field*, *Kibbutz Ma'abarot*, 1939. Jerusalem: Israel State Archives.

If a critical act, according to Azoulay, involves the relocation of a totem from its own system of references and values, to another system where its meanings and position of power are being challenged, then we need to understand how Empty House treats the model of the Kibbutz and the historical information collected through the research period. The research conducted by Empty House on the area of the Kibbutz is part of their general working method in each of their projects. The story is then documented and presented as a background narrative. This was the case with *Kibbutz DIY*, where the story of Ben-Zvi and her educational farm, was mentioned in the the first issue of the *Kibbutz DIY* journal, alongside images and documentation that were exhibited in the old chicken coop, which was transformed into the Kibbutz gallery. Apart from that, there was no direct link or attempt for a full restoration of the historical educational farm. Rather it was a starting point in which the notion of Kibbutz was conceived.[51] A critical

[51] Elad Yaron, email to the author, 27 December 2017.

engagement with the historical implications and geopolitical context of the Kibbutz and the area was not included in the research outcomes. Such implications include the transformation of most Kibbutzim in Israel from socialist and agricultural communes, to privatised, elitist and highly selective dwelling areas since the 1990s (Tzfadia and Yacobi, 2015).[52]

In the introduction, I described Rancière's three levels that produce an aesthetic community. The second level follows the utilisation of forms, words and sound into a new sensory reality, and establishes a dissensus between the new sensory reality and that of the police order. The constellation of *Kibbutz DIY* indeed offers a temporary removal from the way the sensible is distributed. *Kibbutz DIY* is a dissensual figure as it stands against the privatisation of resources and land. Yet, it does that without de-territorialising the totemic significance of this constellation. In that sense, it falls short of the promise for an aesthetic community, as it follows the mainstream Israeli art narrative tendency to neutralise politically charged concepts in works of art, referring only to their formalist qualities. Empty House's relationships with the authorities also affirm their place within the police order. Empty House

[52] This was due to the housing shortage during the mass immigration from post soviet union countries, as well as a crisis within the agricultural branch, which led to many farmers abandoning the fields that were leased to them by the state – Kibbutzim were going through some financial reforms. The most significant one was allowing farmers to change the designation of agricultural fields into profitable real estate projects, mostly for residential and commerce purposes. The right to change the designation of agricultural fields was only given to farmers who were part of cooperative associations and settlements blocks. Since most of the private farmers were Arabs, they were denied all the material benefits as well as the option to skip the agricultural crisis. This change also benefited the Kibbutzim financially as it raised their cultural and economic status, increased the negative population growth, and brought new residents. To prevent a drastic change in the demography and characteristics of the Kibbutzim, extensive admission policies were applied. To some scholars, while external and internal processes of reforms and privatisation damaged the ideological infrastructures in which Kibbutzim were implemented, they continued to secure the nationalist and territorial interests of Israel by maintaining continuity and concentration of Jewish residents. Moreover, the expansion of admission committees was also used against certain groups of Jews that were considered less desirable candidates (Tzfadia and Yacobi, 2015: 421).

entered the abandoned space of *Kibbutz DIY* without permission, which led to police officers checking the space several times while Empty House members were at work. Apart from that there was no real confrontation that could have occurred if the project was perceived as threatening. Quite the opposite, as the history of Empty House's independent and artistic initiatives – which took place in other abandoned locations in Jerusalem for short periods of time and brought many visitors and tourists – seem to fit the young, dynamic and creative image Jerusalem City Council wishes to give the city. It was only after the project was over that the police came and dismantled the infrastructure to prevent other squatters from taking over.

While exposing hidden power structures and relations, critical art discourse is often limited to the critical reading of the set of assumptions, chronologies and names which construct the mainstream Israeli art narrative (Manor, 2005[b]). It does not offer an alternative canon, rather an alternative reading of the canon which only perpetuates it as the main anchor of reference. Within this limitation, projects such as *Kibbutz DIY* can only be evaluated as a critical or affirmative act of the police order. The Empty House decision to use the Kibbutz as a starting point without its historical implications, can be a subject for criticism, but it also opens a path for new ways to challenge, map, contextualise and decipher totemic concepts and ideas. Moreover, these new ways occur far away from established art centres thus suggesting alternative spaces to make and distribute art. For that purpose, the Kibbutz is used as a model to think of the conditions and possibilities for constituting a new sensory reality for the creative community living in Jerusalem. As I show in the fourth chapter, this model will receive a more stabilised form in Empty

House latest and ongoing project*, The Factory.* This is a continuous exploration by Empty House that did not start or end with *Kibbutz DIY*. As described in the first issue of *Kibbutz DIY* journal (Empty House, 2012[b]: 3):

> Our story is the story of experimentation – the collective, the collaborative, the cultural, the creative – to dare, explore and touch central and controversial subjects. To ask questions on the land we built upon and on the place we live in, and suggest some raw and temporary answers of our own.

Within this description of Empty House projects, the importance of the place is not ignored, yet the meanings and the answers given to it are not decisive. In comparison to other projects, the case of *Kibbutz DIY* is different as it relies on an already existing form, but at the same time this form is built almost out of nothing, as opposed to invading an already existing house. The working process of building from scratch resembles Guattari's idea of the production of subjectivities as an on-going process, compared to an artist creating new forms from his or her palette (Guattari, 1995). And while the Kibbutz already holds a long history, *Kibbutz DIY* is only realised through the continuous construction of it. The new meanings embedded within the project are in constant change as *Kibbutz DIY* is developed. Every structure that is built immediately changes the dynamics of the Kibbutz member and the ways in which they understand their work. Like Muslala's, *Between Green and Red*, the construction of the surface of *Kibbutz DIY* is at the centre of producing new subjectivities, generating emotional encounters through the act of shared labour. In contrast to Muslala's collaboration with the residents of Musrara neighbourhood, *Kibbutz DIY* is an attempt to create a new community which does not respond to the existing intra-Jewish relations in Israel or the ethno-national conflict between Israelis-Jews and

Palestinian-Arabs. The reliance on the form of the Kibbutuz, as I show in the following paragraphs is to to utilise the status of artists as pioneers, and the opposite – transforming labour into a work of art.

2.3.3 The Art of Labour

Returning to the first issue of *Kibbutz DIY* journal, Empty House elaborates on the decision to use the model of the Kibbutz (Empty House, 2012[b]: 3):

> The ground and the idea of the Kibbutz are the roots in which we wish to spout an independent, productive-cultural factory. We wish to work and process the unique vision – lost, even – of the Kibbutz through manual labour. We wish to return, under contemporary conditions, to the experiment of establishing here a site that allows for communal cultural-creative life.

Kibbutz DIY is one of several other constellations initiated by Empty House that expresses the search for a cultural home in Jerusalem. It thus translates the J14 Movement demands, where Empty House was officially established, from a struggle over the housing shortage, to a cultural mission. In Jerusalem this mission seems highly important as most of the art students leave the city after graduation, due to employment shortages, and religious and political tensions. The act of finding a home then starts from its basic foundation – a collaborative act of literally building a house and the necessary infrastructure to maintain the community's needs. As mentioned earlier, most of the project's duration was devoted to the task of building the Kibbutz. It included clearing the space from a massive field of oats and accumulated rubbish, constructing dirt roads (and giving them names), building electricity and water infrastructure, and installing toilets and a shower. The existing remains of the educational farm were painted, reconstructed and transformed into different units such as a kiosk, a gallery

space (in the old chicken coop), a greenhouse, a kitchen, laundromat, dining room, club, radio station, a pool and a children's house. Every activity was documented in the second issue of *Kibbutz DIY* journal, thus placing at the centre of the project the technical, mundane and marginal tasks (Empty House, 2012[c]; Yaron, 2013).

In both the first and second issues of *Kibbutz DIY* journal there were images of Empty House members in their work. In the first journal they were situated adjacent to the historical images of the Ben-Zvi's educational farm. On page 14 (figure 21) of the journal, some of the members were depicted in different working positions, such as sweeping away straw and using a post pounder for driving in fence posts, alongside other gestures such as lying on a pile of straw. Another image of an Empty House member was placed alongside Jean-François Millet's painting, *The Sower* (1850), as they both share a similar working position. The last two postures resonate with the exploration of 19th century European artists, such as Millet, Vincent Van Gogh and Gustave Courbet with the rural and labouring life (see Dabrowski, 1999). Within an Israeli art context, these images correspond to the photographs of Zoltan Kluger depicting pre-state Jewish settlers, as well as the paintings of Nahum Gutman, of Arabic fellahin in working or resting positions. In the case of Empty House we can see how the portraits of the fellahin, workers and the Jewish pioneers, are embedded within their own artistic practice. This is neither a situation of an artist admiring from an observer position what seems to them the most authentic and simple connection to nature, nor of an artist undertaking a national duty of documenting and distributing images of a nation building itself. This is a case where the artist becomes the pioneer not

just by doing the work, but by associating the artist with pioneering qualities of precedence, risk taking and a sense of a mission and urgency.

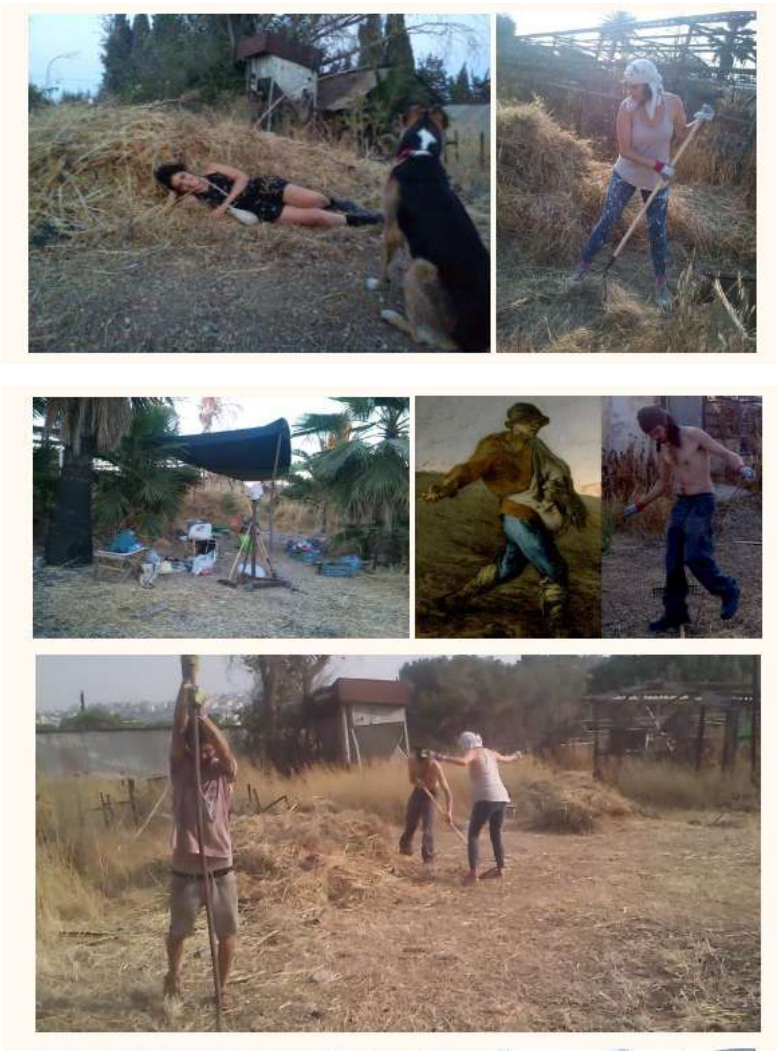

Figure 21: Empty House, *Kibbutz DIY*, 2013, under construction. In Empty House, 2012[b] (screenshot of page 14).

This sense of mission and urgency is well described in Empty House texts, and is what motivated them to form as a collective during the J14 Movement. It can be understood through the notion of affect where the bodily encounter with a new experience – in this case the emergence of a new civil movement – leads to an action whose consequences and motivations are not very clear. Another link between Empty House and the J14 movement, with emphasis on the mainstream enactment on Rothschild boulevard in Tel Aviv, is the

similar modes of action, such as the occupation of public space and its transformation into a performative space where people learn to live and work with one another. The production of a new aesthetic assemblage by the J14 movement protesters, as elaborated in the first chapter, also aimed at updating the Israeli political lexicon and to articulate new meanings for collective and direct action that did not correlate with the public understanding of binaries such as left-right, and political-social. This is something that is also visible in Empty House texts or interviews, where they avoid using direct language regarding their practice and its relation to political and social issues in Israel which might associate them to a specific political party or block. In an article published in Haaretz newspaper, they explain the lack of a formulated theoretical framework for their actions as a way to escape a "one dimensional agenda" (Rotem, 2013: online). "Articulation," Empty House explains in the article, "is our Achilles' heel". This statement is more true of Israeli public expectations of a clear message regarding the artists' intentions (such as with the case of Musrara residents), than of Empty House's expressive skills, which are quite poetic and well phrased. Empty House tries to tackle this not by writing a new manifesto, but by an open call for action. In *Kibbutz DIY* one can see how the physical involvement in the planning and constructing of the Kibbutz compensates for the lack of a clear vision regarding the intentions of the project. Instead of a detailed agenda there is a commitment to small or 'marginal' tasks that shapes the Kibbutz surface, and therefore the potential to constitute a new aesthetic community.

One of the elements that holds the promise for an aesthetic community is equality, which according to Rancière (2006), plays a central role of the aesthetic regime of art. As opposed to the hierarchic and categorised structure of the representational regime of art, Empty House considers every task equally significant, from the cleaning of the road, covering structures with roofs, sewing blankets and pillows, writing the journal, installing pipelines and irrigation systems, as well as the bell that is used to announce meals and meetings, to hanging images of the history of the area on the gallery walls. Equality here is achieved through the transectoral component in Empty House projects. This is a double process of both learning new skills by consulting professionals, and of re-skilling, in which artistic knowledge is integrated with what are considered to be behind the scenes technical skills. This is how, for example, Yaron explains that sculptors are good at doing infrastructure works, and sound artists share their wider knowledge and experience with different technical works.[53] This combining and reinventing of skills have upgraded the life quality in the Kibbutz to the extent that in the last month of the project, the core group of Empty House and many of those who joined the project from its start, did not leave the area (figures 22-23). This self-sustaining quality of *Kibbutz DIY* was what made it one of the most ambitious projects Empty House have produced.

[53] Elad Yaron, email to the author, 27 December 2017.

Figure 22. Empty House, *Kibbutz DIY*, 2013. Map. Empty House's website page. Translation made by the Author.

Figure 23. Empty House*, Kibbutz DIY, 2013*. Empty House's website page. Photo by Israel Izzy Schallheim.

figure 24. Empty House, *Kibbutz DIY, 2013.* The Laundromat. Empty House's website page. Photo by Yuval Yairi.

Kibbutz DIY succeeded in offering this sense of home and community that Empty House talked about in their first launching text. The project's affective qualities can be seen in the response of dozens of artists who replied the open call. Together they laid the groundwork for not only thinking about how a group of artists and other creative subjects can work and collaborate together, but also how they can live together. Within the discussion on community making and affect, it is important to note again the other

transversal elements that have been ignored. This project relied on a totemic form that is strongly connected to the Israeli police order, and is associated with the socialist Ashkenazi elite of the early decades of the Zionist movement and the state of Israel. For this reason, it is limited in its ability to produce revolutionary affects that cut across classes, nationalities and ethnicities, as the other case studies in this chapter attempted to produce. Similar to the critique raised in regards to the J14 movement, the use of Israeli-Jewish sensorial forms, such as the Hebrew language and Zionist totems have predetermined the limited potentialities of the protest – or in this case the art project – to fundamentally challenge the police order.

These blind spots that were deliberately ignored by members of Empty House have nonetheless informed and enabled *Kibbutz DIY*. The relocation of the aesthetic language of the J14 movement from the Israeli political discourse to the artistic discourse, allowed for a new conversation on the meanings of artistic action and for a new artistic community to take form. The project offered an aesthetic constellation where life and art merged for a short period of time. In *Kibbutz DIY* every mundane act became poetic and every poetic act became mundane. This can be seen, for example, in the Kibbutz laundromat which was run by artist Moran Aviv (figure 24). Members of the Kibbutz gave her their dirty clothes, and received temporary new clothes while the dirty ones were washed in a mix of turmeric, carrot and paprika. These clothes were also stamped with the slogan of the project – an illustration of a water tower with the word Kibbutz underneath, written in an old fashioned font. The act of washing the clothes can be seen as an initiation or acceptance from the Kibbutz member, who becomes associated

through this ‘uniform’. Another case is the children’s house, where the children lived in more traditional Kibbutzim (figure 25). In *Kibbutz DIY* the children’s house became a space where children could draw and build from disposable material their own dream house models. As for the Kibbutz gallery, Empty House members referred to it as a joke, given the fact that the entire place was an artwork. Apart from single contemporary artworks, the gallery depicted the history of Ben-Zvi’s educational farm alongside on-site excavated findings from different periods (figure 26). It is interesting to examine the place of the gallery from the aspect of the historical foundations and legacy of *Kibbutz DIY*, which I already referred to as a pioneering act of determining new conditions for making and depicting art. Moreover, the gallery relates to the self-reflectiveness of the collective, which can be seen in each of the case studies. It is self-reflective in the sense that while the collective sets new foundations for future artistic practices in the city, it also contextualises the collective’s practices within a broader context by creating their own archive. The art collectives’ role in inventing new artistic practices and art spaces, revising the past, and taking part in producing new art histories will be discussed in the next chapter.

Figure 25. Empty House, *Kibbutz DIY*, 2013. The Children's House. Empty House's website page.

The last six days of *Kibbutz DIY* were open to the public. It was both a celebration of the Kibbutz before it was about to be dismantled, as well as a way for Empty House members to cover expenses by selling food and alcohol. The last days included live performances and music, lectures and conversations about alternative forms of living and organising, story time, theatre and drawing workshops, bodywork sessions, a live radio station, and a communal room serving local and world food. Within the formation of an aesthetic community, the last days of *Kibbutz DIY* can be understood as the assemblage of the sensory reality produced in the Kibbutz with the more mainstream artistic scene. All the facilities developed during the first two months of *Kibbutz DIY* were introduced to the public in accessible forms of socialising and coming together events. It was a way for Empty House to distribute the sensory reality produced in *Kibbutz DIY* before the project ended. During these last days another spontaneous and organic installation emerged which was initiated by the visiting public. A garden netting was transformed into a beer wall, with the visitors stuffing empty beer bottles in

the netting (figure 27). As Empty House member, Elad Yaron, described it in a conference presentation, it was the crowd's own way of taking part in building the new Eretz Israel (Yaron, 2013: 21:04-21:12).

Figure 26. Empty House, *Kibbutz DIY*, 2013. The Gallery. Empty House's website page.

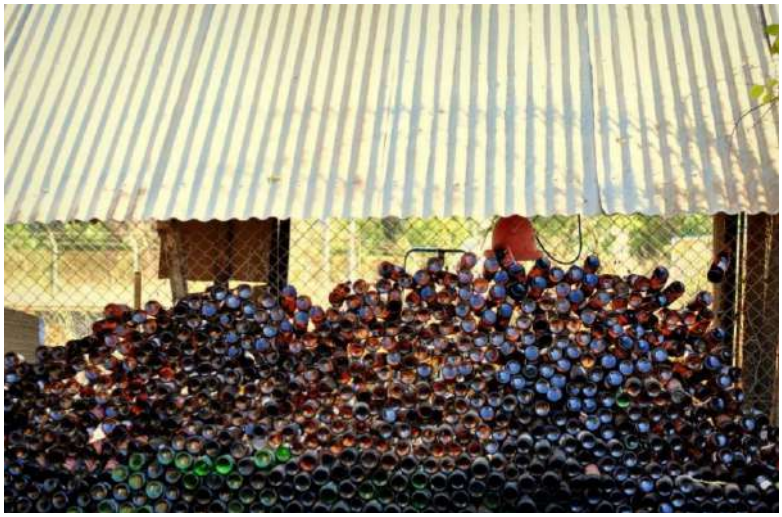

Figure 27. Empty House, *Kibbutz DIY*, 2013. The Beer Wall. Empty House's website page.

2.4 Arteam, *The Garden Library* (2009-ongoing): Transnationlity in South Tel Aviv

The last section of this chapter continues the discussion of producing new subjectivities, while focusing on the element of transnationality from a different angle than that shown in the Muslala case study. It focuses on the

project initiated by the art group Arteam, *The Garden Library* (2009), an ongoing project which consists of a multi-lingual library located in Levinsky Garden in Neve Sha'anan neighbourhood in south Tel Aviv. The location of the library is different from the types of spaces used by Empty House and Muslala (abandoned spaces or a neighbourhood which has struggled socially and economically in the past and become more established and gentrified in the present). The area of south Tel Aviv is often described as Israel's backyard, especially in relation to environmental damage caused from the new Central Bus Station (CBS) and the high proportion of work migrants and asylum seekers who live there (Misgav 2013). This area offers a unique case study to discuss transnationality in Israel, as it expands the national discourse which is mostly around Israeli and Palestinian national identities.

In this section I rely on art historian Tal Dekel's (2016) understanding of transnationality. According to Dekel (Ibid: 5-10), the term does not necessarily indicate the end of national identities and boundaries, rather the formation of new and old intersections between national, ethnic, religious, and gendered forms of identification. In contrast to the discourse on globalisation that describes a homogenised and one-sided movement (from the West to the rest) of commodities, money, merchandise and ideas, a transnational approach highlights the consequences of global economic and political processes which connect globalisation to other forms of oppression, such as colonialism, patriarchy and racism. Moreover, a transnational approach emphasises the ways in which individual and collective subjects give meaning to these processes through their own experience of movement and migration (Ibid). This definition for transnationalism is used to analyse

the production of a transnational space in the area of south Tel Aviv. I will also refer to this area as a border zone based on Étienne Balibar's (2004: 1-2) discussion on borders. Balibar (Ibid) understands border zones as areas in which their peripheral location and diverse population constitute a different sense of the common (demos) that challenges the meaning of citizenship (politeia). I examine this observation in light of the the relationships between centre and periphery in Israel and the production of a transnational space in *The Garden Library*.

2.4.1 Israel's Backyard – Neve Sha'anan Neighbourhood, South Tel Aviv

The area of south Tel Aviv includes three neighbourhoods, Shapira, Neve-Sha'anan and HaTikva. This section focuses on the history of the Neve-Sha'anan neighbourhood where *The Garden Library* was initiated. Neve Sha'anan in Hebrew means "a peaceful abode". The name comes from one of the prophecies of Isaiah "a peaceful abundant, a tent that will not be moved" (Isaiah, 33, 20). The land upon which the neighbourhood was built was purchased in 1922, along as the rest of the neighbourhoods of the city of Tel Aviv. Similarly to many new Jewish settlements built in British-Mandate Palestine, the building of Neve-Sha'anan was motivated by the tension between the Jewish and the Arab population, most specifically the 1921 Jaffa riots where Arab residents attacked the Jewish neighbourhood in Jaffa. In addition, insecure investments in houses around the country led to a group of 400 Jews from Jaffa to organise under the name "Neve Sha'anan" and purchase their own residential neighbourhood (Misgav, 2015).

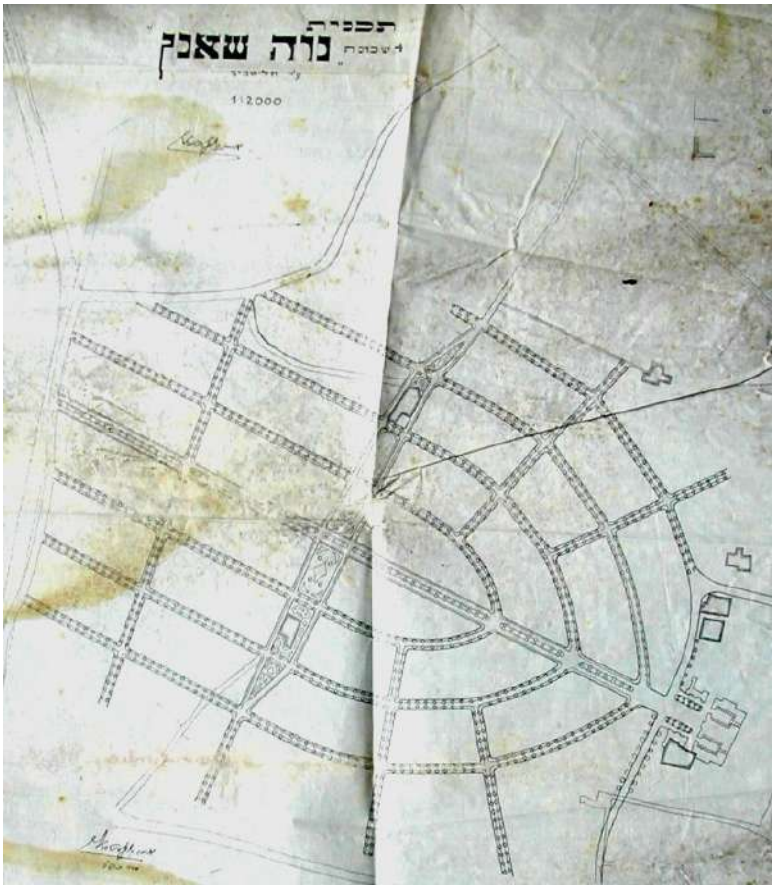

Figure 28. Yitzhak Tishler, Neve-Sha'anan's architectural plan, c.1920s. Tel Aviv 100, Urban Encyclopedia.

According to critical urban scholars (Hatuka 2010; Misgav, 2015; Rotbard 2015) the building of Neve Sha'anan neighbourhood can be understood as an alternative vision to both the ideal agricultural communal life in Moshavim and Kibbutzim as well as to the myth that surrounds the city of Tel Aviv as the first Hebrew city, sprung from the sand, free from any historical and religious baggage (unlike the city of Jerusalem) – Tel Aviv brought with it the promise of the production of a new Hebrew, modern and bourgeois subject (Zalmona, 2013).[54] The group itself was mixed and consisted of Ashkenazi, Sephardic and Yemeni Jews who came from different professional backgrounds.

[54] In the light of the previous discussion, Tel Aviv can be understood as another Israeli-Zionist totem – much like the Kibbutz – both in relation to Israeli-Zionist history as well as Israeli art history. I will elaborate on the last matter in the next chapter.

Despite their different background and professions, they all shared a cooperative ideology with the neighbourhood members responsible for one another. Neve Sha'anan was planned as multicultural and trans-sectoral Jewish community, aiming to produce an economically independent agricultural model close to the city (the land of the neighbourhood was full of orchards and vineyards) while still being adjacent to the education institutions and other services provided by Tel Aviv. The architectural master plan of NeveSha'anan is unique and highlights some of its founders' ideals. The streets were intended to follow the shape of the Jewish Menorah (a seven-branched candelabra) in which Levinsky main street is the central arm and the other "arms" connected to it from both sides (figure 28).[55] Alongside the shack houses built in the neighbourhood, the overall plan can be seen in opposition to the international architectural style that is mostly associated with Tel Aviv. The plan was halfway completed with only three "arms" coming out of Levinsky street. This was due to the neighbourhood committee's decision to focus on building the first CBS in the area as a result of financial difficulties (figure 29) (Misgav, 2015).

[55] Levinsky street is named after Elhanan Leib Lewinsky, a Lithuanian-Jewish author and a Zionist activist who lived in the mid 19th century. Lewinsky is considered the author of the first fiction novel written in Modern Hebrew in 1892. The novel, *A Journey the the Land of Israel in the Year 5800* [2040 in the Gregorian calender], is a futuristic story portraying Israel in 2040 as a socialist, ethical and peace-loving state.

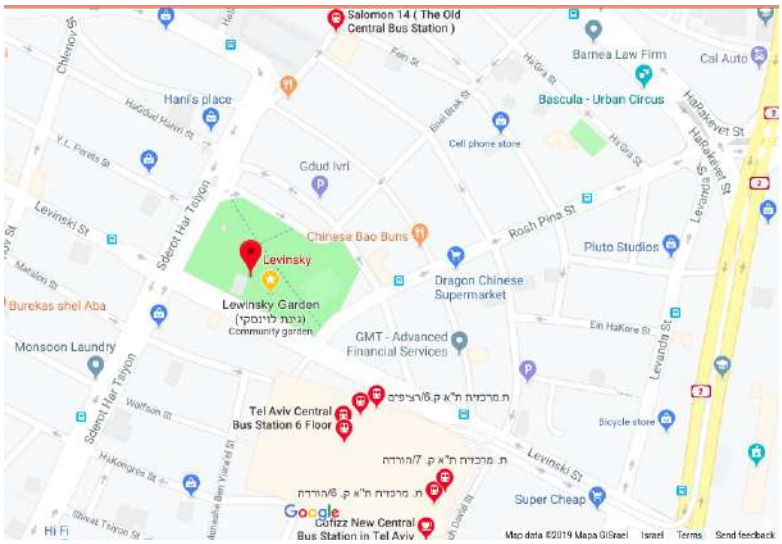

Figure 29. Neve Sha'anan neighbourhood, south Tel Aviv. Google Maps.

According to architect and urban scholar Tali Hatuka (2010), the history of Neve Sha'anan can be summarised in three parts: i) Neve Sha'anan as an agricultural centre between the 1920s and the 1940s ii) a transportation centre since the 1940s iii) and an immigrant centre since the 1990s. The two last developments in the neighbourhood are central reasons for the deterioration of the neighbourhood, with most residents coming from a low-medium social background.[56] It was however from the early 1990s with the building of the new CBS in Neve Sha'anan and the non-Jewish immigration waves that the area started to receive public attention (Ibid). The building of the new CBS became a burden for the residents of Neve Sha'anan who

[56] While the transformation of Neve Sha'anan from an agricultural to a transportation centre played a central role in the deterioration of the neighbourhood, there were prior reasons for the financial difficulty that Neve Sha'anan residents found themselves. One of them was the unfulfilled promises of the Zionist administration to provide loans and financial support that led to the neighbourhood committee to get in debt. Second, the neighbourhood was surrounded by orchards of Jewish and Arab agriculturalists that separated the neighbourhood from other parts of Tel-Aviv and from its urban infrastructure. It made it difficult to maintain an independent economic base outside of urbanite and Zionist officialdom. At the end of the 1940s after Israel was established, Neve Sha'anan was considered to be a slum alongside other neighbourhoods in Tel Aviv-Jaffa, such as the former Palestinian neighbourhood of Manshiyya and the neighbourhood of Mahlul. However, in contrast to these neighbourhoods that were adjacent to the seashore, Neve Sha'anan received less attention as it was lacking the tourist and cultural potential of the other neighbourhoods. Instead, Tel Aviv municipality put all its investment into making Neve Sha'anan a central transportation centre as a way to properly connect Tel Aviv to the rest of the country (Misgav, 2015).

suffer from the noise, the crowdedness and the pollution resulting from 5000 buses passing through the new CBS every day (Keshet, 2014). In addition, the Israeli government decided to import work migrants from Asia, East Europe, South America and Africa as a result of the closure policy in the West Bank and Gaza where most of the workers arrived (Hatuka, 2010; Schnell, 1999),[57] many of them stayed in Neve Sha'anan area due to the accessibility of transport and the cheap cost of living. Another wave of immigration started in the early 2000s with the arrival of ten thousand asylum seekers mostly from Sudan and Eritrea (ibid).[58]

Between the years 2009 and 2012, prior to the amendments of the Anti-Infiltration law,[59] asylum-seekers who arrived into Israel through the Egyptian

[57] The model of Palestinian foreign workers from the Palestinian Territories was established after the Six Days War in 1967. They work on a commuting model, returning every evening to their homes (Schnell, 1999).

[58] According to the first quarter report for the year 2018 of the Administration of Border Crossing, Population and Immigration, there are 36,630 infiltrators (the official terminology for describing undocumented immigrants in Israel). 72% of the undocumented migrants currently in Israel are from Eritrea, 20% from Sudan, 7% are from other African counties and 1% from the rest of the world (Administration of Border Crossing, Population and Immigration, 2018). In Eritrea people flee from the dictatorial regime in which all Eritreans must serve in the army for an unknown period of time. There is also religious persecution of certain Christian sectors. Many of the asylum-seekers from Sudan flee as a result of ongoing ethnic conflicts and extreme violation of human rights, especially in Darfur and the Nuba Mountains. The number of new undocumented migrants coming from Africa has dramatically declined in comparison to the first annual report of the Administration of Border Crossing, Population and Immigration (2015) where there were 47,137 infiltrators. The number has decreased due to the completion of the border fence separating Israel and Egypt in 2012, as well as Israel's "leave willingly" policy which encourages undocumented migrants to leave Israel for a third country in Africa.

[59] Amendments to the Anti-Infiltration law enacted on June 2012. Under this law, undocumented migrants who entered Israel via the Egyptian border are jailed for a period of three years. This new version of the Anti-Infiltration law was voided by the Supreme Court of Justice. In the latest version of this law, which is currently in force, everyone who enters Israel via the Egyptian border is held in Saharonim Prison located in the south of Israel. After three months, the detainees are transferred to the adjacent Holot detention centre for a period of twelve months. Asylum-seekers who are already in Israel and come to renew their visa are also sent to Holot. According to the Hotline for Refugees and Migrants organisation, the purpose of this law is to harden the lives of asylum seekers so they will choose to "voluntarily" leave Israel. Since 2013, the Israeli government has allowed asylum seekers – both detainees and non-detainees – to file asylum claims. As of July 2016 Israel acknowledged only four Eritreans and one Darfurian as refugees (Hotline: online).

border were taken by the Israel Defence Force to the new CBS in Tel Aviv. Most of them remained in the area since it already had a relatively comfortable network and infrastructure for non-Jewish migrants, such as humanitarian NGOs and churches. Because Israel is signed up to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, the Israeli government has activated a “temporary protection” or “delay of removal” policy, as the Convention forbids countries to deport asylum seekers to their original countries if it means that their life is likely to be endangered. However, the Israeli government refuses to regulate the status of most asylum seekers. Instead, when asylum seekers enter Israel from the Egyptian border, they receive a temporary visa which needs to be renewed regularly. This visa allows asylum seekers to stay but does not grant any proper status or rights, such as the right to work and the right to receive health care.

The condition of asylum seekers in Israel led to a situation of exploitation and contempt, especially in the labour and housing markets. Moreover, issues regarding undocumented migrants in Israel are treated under the Anti-Infiltration law which originally referred to groups from neighbouring countries, mostly Palestinians, who infiltrated Israel in the 1950s in order to claim their former territories or conduct attacks on Israeli cities and military bases. This association with the original ‘infiltrators’, connecting current asylum seekers to problems of state security and demographic threat, has increased public hostility and racism towards them. Despite the Israeli state’s official policy towards undocumented migrants, the challenges resulting from their condition led to the partial involvement of the Tel Aviv municipality in the relative improvement of the the area of south Tel Aviv by establishing the

organisation Mesila – Aid and Information Centre for Migrant Workers and Refugees, which provides welfare and health services that cannot be formally granted to asylum seekers. As part of the growing awareness of the difficulties of asylum seekers other agents have become involved in improving their life. The Arteam and Onya collectives are amongst them. While Onya is explored in the next chapters, this section focus on *The Garden Library* built by Arteam.

2.4.2 *The Garden Library*

> At times when one's world is dark, one opens a book and see a different world" - S.Y. Agnon, a Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature, 1966.

The Garden Library was the first and only project of the art group Arteam. The group consists of artist Hadas Ophrat, curator and art scholar Tali Tamir, artist Romy Achituv, architect Yoav Meiri and artist and author Marit Ben-Israel. As opposed to the other collectives discussed in this research, Arteam members are already established and well known professionals with most of their time devoted to their own individual projects. As Ophrat said, they were already in the phase of their lives where they wanted to give to others.[60] The idea for a collaborative project began in 2008 by Ophrat and Tamir, when their initial idea was to open a multi-disciplinary art centre to accompany and support interventionist art practices in the public space. The group was not fixed on the area of Neve Sha'anan and considered at first renting a studio in the commercial and entertainment district of Tel Aviv Port. It was after they met Meiri, who has a studio next to the new CBS in Neve Sha'anan, who told them about an idea he had of building a library in the neighbourhood that

[60] An interview with Hadas Ophrat in his house, 30.07.18.

The Garden Library was conceived.[61] Until that moment there was no public library in the neighbourhood. The reason for that, according to public librarians who spoke with the group, was that there was not really an official public in the neighbourhood (Zandebrg, 2009). The finalised group emerged a short time afterwards when Achituv and Ben-Israel joined, and the decision was made to build a public library in Neve Sha'anan.

Although *The Garden Library* holds books in the Hebrew language, the project was first and foremost aimed at the foreign communities in south Tel Aviv. The timing was crucial – by 2009 there were 21,857 asylum seekers entering Israel from the Egyptian border, a number that had almost tripled by 2012.[62] The lack of proper infrastructure to absorb and treat their requests led to many of them to adopt the public spaces of south Tel Aviv – mostly unused spaces in the new CBS and Levinsky Garden – as their home. When Arteam started working on their project, there were several hundred asylum seekers already sleeping in Levinsky Garden. Arteam members were interested in providing artistic solutions to the problems asylum seekers and work migrants faced in the area, as a way of complementing other welfare, legal, housing and health aid provided by already existing organisations such as Mesila, the Hotline for Refugees and Migrants and Assaf – Aid Organisation for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel. With the help of the Mesila organisation, Arteam met with members of the foreign communities in the area of south Tel Aviv to understand what exactly was needed. The decision to build a library came from their understanding that reading is a

[61] Information given in an interview with Hadas Ophrat in his house, 30.07.18.

[62] This number does not include migrant workers – most of them hold a working visa. By 2014 their number reached to 88,671 (Administration of Border Crossing, Population and Immigration, 2014).

basic human right. It combined both immediate needs of the communities, such as providing a safe haven from the difficulties of their daily routines, as well as other long term needs, such as improving literacy skills especially for kids. Levinsky Garden was chosen as the location of the library as it was both a physical home for many of the asylum seekers, as well a meeting point for migrants during the weekends. The library was therefore already located in a space the foreign communities felt comfortable and relatively safe in, which increased the chances of them taking part in it.

Arteam is an interesting case study that reflects many issues facing artists who are interested in contributing to social causes. They are not the only group of artists who aid asylum seekers in the area. For example, in 2012 producer and actress Orly Feldheim and artist Yigal Shtayim founded “Soup Levinsky” which offered warm meals and later collected donations of products for asylum seekers. Yet throughout the interview I conducted with Ophrat it was important for him to emphasise that *The Garden Library* is not the act of people who happen to be artists that volunteer for social and political causes, rather their goal was to think of this engagement in artistic terms and to progress this project as an art project. This approach resonates with Guattari’s idea (cited in Lazzarato, 2008: 174) of the aesthetic paradigm that highlights the place of “artistic *techniques and Practices*” rather than “art itself” and the ways art’s qualities are utilised in other domains – a kind of transversal movements of skills. The process of providing a solution artistically is reflected in many aspects in the making of *The Garden Library*, through the many hours spent on designing the library, deciding on the types of books and the way they would be catalogued and phrasing a manifesto-

like statement describing the different meanings of this library. The questions raised from this process combined the practical with the poetic, the political with the aesthetic. Arteam researched the types of readers who might use the library: when would they come? What would they want to read? What is the best structure of this type of library? What kind of borrowing services will the library provide? Will the library offer other services and activities? Who might be potential partners for such a complicated project? Where will the money come from? Many of these questions were answered after *The Garden Library* was formally launched on October 31, 2009.[63]

Figure 30. Arteam. *The Garden Library*, 2009. Design by Yoav Meiri (Arteam). Yoav Meiri's website.

2.4.2.1 A Library With No Walls

The design of *The Garden Library*, made by Meiri, aimed to give this welcoming feeling. It does this by the lack of a closed structure or any type of boundaries, such as fences or a guard, which makes the library an integral part of Levinsky Garden. Yet at the same time the construction of the library provides an intimate space which allows the reader to find a quiet and comfortable place to read a book. *The Garden Library* has two rectangular

[63] These questions appeared in a draft document produced by ARTEAM during the first stages of planning *The Garden Library*. It was shown to me by Hadas Ophrat in his house during an interview, 30.07.18.

bookcases. The big one that is attached to the public shelter located in Levinsky Garden and is the adult library (figure 30). It has glass doors and a lever cover which provides a shaded sitting area when the library is open. The lever cover is gridded so when the library is closed it is possible to see through to the books. In the beginning of *The Garden Library* the bookcase was also lit during the nights. The decision to turn the lights off came after rough sleepers complained that it bothered them while they trying to sleep. The second structure is located in front of the big bookcase. It is half the size of the bigger structure and contains children's books (figure 31). The doors of the smaller structure are heavier than the lever cover, and are made out of wood. They open facing downward so kids can sit on them while reading. The space that was created between both structures can hold different cultural and educational events and programmes, as well as being a social meeting point. Later on Tel Aviv municipality donated a shade canopy that covers both structures and protects the library and its reader from the weather (figure 32). Meiri (2017: online), on his website, describes the design as modest and simple to allow for informal relationships between the library and the readers to occur.

Figure 31. Arteam. *The Garden Library*, 2009. The Kids Library. Source: *The Garden Library* website. Photo by Romy Achituv.

In *The Garden Library* manifesto the space is described as having "an element of defiance of normalisation, of improving life quality, of a clear democratic pleasure".[64] The last statement reflects Arteam's intention to highlight the act of reading and a reading space as a basic universal human right, as well as the element of multiplicity and diversity which is reflected in a multi-lingual library which offers every reader the right to a particular reading experience. *The Garden Library* holds about 3,500 books in more than sixteen languages, such as Mandarin, English, Amharic, Tigrinia, Roman, Spanish, French, Thai, Nepalese, Hindi, Tagalo, and Hebrew. By definition, this library is transnational as it allows those who are foreign, temporary and in a constant movement, to maintain an intimate connection to their home and their mother-tongue. The children's bookcase is more complex. While it is also a multi-lingual library – a way for the parents' to pass on their language and culture to their children – most of the books in the library are in

[64] Taken from a text shown to author by Ophrat during an interview, July 30, 2018.

Hebrew. Considering the fact that the kids either arrived in Israel at a young age or were born there, the Hebrew language and Israeli culture became a no less dominant part of their sense of identity. Moreover, most of them go to Israeli schools with other kids whose parents are work migrants or asylum seekers and Hebrew becomes the common language where everyone can communicate with each other.

Figure 32. Arteam. *The Garden Library*, 2009. Source: Hit (Holon Institute of Technology) website.

2.4.2.2 The Passion of Reading

Another aspect where one can see the circulation of new emotions in *The Garden Library* is through Arteam's catalogue system. As the members of Arteam and most of the volunteers cannot understand the books' languages, collaboration with the local communities was necessary in the process of organising the books. The books themselves came from all around the world through embassies and Israelis living abroad. It was decided that the front and back cover of each book would be scanned to make it easier for the library volunteers to work with them. The way in which the books were then catalogued was through an emotion index. On the first page of every book

there is a sticker attached asking “how would you describe the book?”. Underneath this question there are seven options: amusing, bizarre, boring, depressing, exciting, inspiring, sentimental (figure 33). Each emotional response has a different catalogue number, so after the book is returned it gets a sticker on the book’s spine based on the emotion which was described by the last reader. The book then goes to the shelf designated to this specific emotion. However, it does not stay there for a long time. If the next reader of the book describes it using a different emotional response, another sticker will be added and the book will be relocated to a different shelf. The books’ spines in *The Garden Library* contain many colourful stripes determining the readers’ emotional opinions of them. Yet the location of the book is not based on the majority opinion, rather on the last reader’s response (The Garden Library, 2012).[65]

Figure 33. Arteam*. The Garden Library*, 2009. Emotional categories labels. *The Garden Library* website.

According to Ben-Israel, the decision to categorise the books based on emotional responses expresses the Arteam intention to produce new ways of classification and identification that are not based on normative ways of categorising languages and genres. For that purpose the book was going through a process fetishisation where, according to the Arteam manifesto, it becomes “an object of personal passion offering ways of escaping to worlds

[65] Interview with Hadas Ophrat, July 30, 2018.

of imagination and inspiration".[66] At the same time the book is perceived as something other than object. It goes through a process of animation where it holds its own emotional history, which goes beyond the written content. This history is dynamic as the book constantly moves between *The Garden Library* shelves, something that according to Ben-Israel, relates to the personal history of the readers (Ben Israel, 2009). The emotional route of each book was given a web-based data visualisation which extracted additional information from the books' histories. This data is visualised in different formats and includes, for example, the emotional movement of each book throughout time, or more of a panoramic view of the different emotions received by books in a specific language. The timeline includes current events affecting the foreign communities, suggesting the connection between the socio-political climate, the choosing of books, and the emotional responses. This is another way to think of the production of knowledge through socially engaged and collaborative art practices, and the way this knowledge can be made familiar and accessible for those who are interested in the lives of the foreign communities (Andrés, 2012: online).

2.4.3 Celebrating Transnationalism on the Frontier

The area of south Tel Aviv can be understood as a border zone in the cultural sense. While geographically south Tel Aviv neighbourhoods – this observation includes the area of Jaffa as well – are located in the central part of Israel and are part of the Tel Aviv metropolis, in regards to class and ethnic affiliation they resemble the development towns which are located in the

[66] Taken from a text shown to the author by Hadas Ophrat during an interview, July 30, 2018.

geographic periphery and national frontiers of Israel (Misgav, 2013: 100).[67] These areas, according to Tzfadia and Yiftachel (2008) are located within a double framework of both inclusion and exclusion. The national discourse includes these areas and its Jewish residents as part of the Zionist project of populating the land of Israel, and determining the Israeli frontiers through the act of settling. The peripheral discourse, however, highlights the cultural, social, geographic, economic and security inferiority of both urban and geographic peripheries due to the lack of resources given to them by the state.[68] Similarly to the case with the Musrara neighbourhood – which can also be understood as an urban or cultural periphery – most of the Jewish residents in the peripheries identify themselves with the Israeli-Jewish national collectivity, and aim to take part in its leadership in order to empower the status of the peripheries within the national framework. According to Misgav (2013), due to its geographically central location, the urban periphery holds a greater potential to challenge both the culture, economy and politics of the centre (in this case, the image of the 'white' and cosmopolitan city of Tel Aviv), as well as the overall dichotomy between the centre and the periphery which was itself designed by the police order. This relates to Balibar's (2003) discussion on borders and transnationalism which according to him locates peripheries and border zones at the centre of attention. By

[67] Development Towns were built following the "Sharon Plan" (1951) which indicated a lack of town and medium size urban centres in Israel. These towns were built mostly during the 1950s and the early 1960s, in distant and isolated locations from the existing urban centres, and were populated by Arab-Jewish immigrants (Tzfadia and Yiftachel, 2008).

[68] It is important to note that during the building of the Development Towns, the periphery was populated also by the dominant group – meaning, secular, socialist Ashkenazi Jews. However, most of them lived in Moshavim and Kibbutzim which hold, as discussed in the previous section, a totemic significance within the Israeli-Jewish order. The differences between Moshavim and Kibbutzim and Development Towns increased with the privatisation of the Israeli economy. While the first forms of settlements received high value within the real estate market, Development Towns are considered to be a cheap investment due to their lack of social prestige (Tzfadia and Yiftachel, 2008).

arguing that *The Garden Library* performs as a transnational border area, I show how the growing visibility of asylum seekers helps challenge the Israeli-Jewish national-neo-liberal police order in two ways: i) by bringing to the front the geographic and cultural peripheries in Israel and their struggle over the distribution of the sensible and ii) by suggesting new frameworks to discuss the notions of citizenship and residency in ways that exceed both the Israeli and Palestinian ethno-national discourse, which relies heavily on the historic and biblical precedence over the land. In the following paragraphs, I focus on the second argument, discussing the first argument in the next chapter where I present the political collaboration between the foreign communities and the Israeli-Jewish residents of south Tel Aviv.

The making of *The Garden Library* as a transnational space was not difficult due to Levinky Garden already being a meeting point for the foreign communities living in Israel. However, when the library was opened more people started arriving to the garden via word to mouth and advertisements of *The Garden Library* in the communities' newspapers. The encounter with more migrants and asylum-seekers in the library helped to better understand the needs for a space such as *The Garden Library.* In a report analysing the conditions of work migrants in Israel, Itzhak Schnell (1999) shows how many work migrants have stated that they became more aware of their unique cultural background when they arrived in Israel. This observation characterises migrants in a transnational era, especially those who immigrate to countries that express hostility and intolerance towards foreigners, and was given a central place in *The Garden Library* activities. Apart from the broad selection of books and languages, other events and programmes were

launched. These activities emphasised *The Garden Library* as an art and culture centre, through arts and craft workshops, dance classes, story time, screenings, holidays celebrations and memorial ceremonies.

Figure 34. Arteam*, Ballet in Levinsky Garden*, 2010. Chinese hand fan dance. Marit Ben Israel Website.

Two major art events which were produced in the first three years of *The Garden Library*, alongside the library's continuous activities, were the "Ballet in Levinsky Garden" (2010) – a multi-cultural and transnational music and dance event, and "Artistic Picnic" (2012) – a gathering day of food, art, music and dancing. They support Schnell's argument regarding the migrants' sense of their unique culture and the need to express it. Similarly to the musical repertoire in Muslala's *Between Green and Red* (2012, 2013) and *Under the Bridge* (2015), these events consisted of local musicians, some of them are well known in their own communities, who performed music that is under-represented in the mainstream musical scene. The musical and dance performances in "Ballet in Levinky Garden" and "Artistic Picnic" reflected the participants' traditions. The performances in "Ballet in Levinsky Garden" included a group from Akwador who performed a pantomime dance about a

mother who waits for her son; the Chinese-Israeli singer Ding Cohen who sang a Chinese song accompanied by a hand fan dance (figure 34); a performance of the Hindu folk dance Raas; a performance of the Philippine rural folk dance Pandanggo by the performer Angie; a performance of the Kambal dance of the Nube tribe in Sudan (figure 35), and the Ethiopian-Jewish musician Dajan Manchelot who sang and played on the traditional Ethiopian musical instrument Masenqo (Ben Israel, 2010; Schlosser, 2011). Another highlight from this event was an original production from *The Garden Library* with the collaboration of Israelis, Sudanese and Indians dancers, a remake of Maurice Béjart's choreography for the orchestral piece *Boléro* by Maurice Ravel (figure 36).[69]

Figure 35. Arteam*, Ballet in Levinsky Garden*, 2010. The Kambal dance. Marit Ben Israel Website.

[69] The dance team: Netally Schlosser (Israel), Samuel Jack (Sudan), Sallah Toto (Sudan), Vanisse Abogor (Sudan), Awwad Yacoub (Sudan), Zaki Babikar (Sudan), Harris Ramadati (India), Motti Brecher (Israel).

Figure 36. Arteam*, Ballet in Levinsky Garden*, 2010. The *Boléro*. Source: Marit Ben Israel Website.

"Artistic Picnic" also included musical performances alongside artworks by Israeli artists that were situated between the picnic blankets. The artworks were diverse and included videos, paintings, sculptures, installations and interactive workshops. According to Ophrat who curated this event with the artist Hanna Ben-Haim, the concept of the event was to connect the legacy of picnicking within Western art as a celebration of nature and life, as well as the social meaning of picnic as "an organised appropriation of the public space by the individual for a short period of time" (Ben Israel, 2012: online). The timing was crucial too. "Artistic Picnic" took place on June 16, 2012, several days after the beginning of the deportation of asylum-seekers from Sudan. It was as a result of the removal of the temporary protection from the Sudanese by the then Minster of the Interior, Eli Yishai. Moreover, the picnic took place during the first 'deportation flight' from Tel Aviv to south Sudan. After several meetings between Arteam and members of the library, it was decided to hold the event regardless, while changing the tone of the event to something between a cultural celebration of diversity and a solidarity

gathering, where members of foreign communities could express their feelings and opinions regarding this latest political development.

The spaces produced in these temporary events allowed for democratic relations to occur in two ways. They democratised art in the sense that they blurred hierarchies of high art and folklore traditions, professional artists and amateur performers. It is important to note, however, that these spaces are not fully detached from the logic of the art market. On the contrary, every year there is an annual art sale where artists sell their works and all income goes toward the maintenance of the library. Second, these spaces are democratic as they allow social mobilisation and the transformation of migrants and asylum seekers into political subjects. This transformation can be understood in terms of active citizenship – i.e. the direct participation in public affairs – by those who have been denied recognition as political subjects in the Israeli public space. It thus suggests a new framework in which to examine the relationship between nationality and citizenship. According to Balibar (2004: 47) this framework can be understood in terms of "the right of entry and residency" (*Droit de cité*) of "immigrants" - a broad term Balibar uses to describes "the diversity of collective situations and individual trajectories covered by this term". Balibar (Ibid: 47-48) perceives "the right of entry and residency" as a preparatory stage for citizenship, for example, through the "modification of criteria of nationality" or through the "extension of the political rights of all residents independent of nationality". The last is understood by Balibar as the liberation of rights from national affiliation, something that according to Balibar was increased as processes of

globalisation has weakened the power of nation-formed states.[70] Balibar (2004: 47) highlights the significance of active citizenship in constituting "the right of entry and residency" as it is based on immigrants expressing their situation, demands, and suggesting solutions. These are processes that can only emerge from below, rather than a right which is granted from above, as they transform the immigrants into "legitimate interlocutors" who participate in the democratic game (Ibid: 48). This act of active citizenship is constantly repeated through the participation of the foreign communities in *The Garden Library*. Their presence in the space posits a dissensus in the way they are portrayed in Israeli politics. The direct encounter of Israeli-Jews with migrants and asylum seekers, as well as the use of the space by migrants and asylum seekers for political performative acts produce a different sensory reality, which puts on hold the unequal status of foreign subjects in Israel and allows them to practice citizenship. Moreover, *The Garden Library* – and in general the area of south Tel Aviv – becomes a space which constitutes new forms of collectivities which are based on the shared experiences of being foreign in Israel. These formations can even assist overcoming antagonistic relationships amongst the diverse foreign communities which bring with them their own national and cultural bias.[71]

Within this framework of emancipation and becoming political subjects through the participation within civic practices, I argue that art holds a crucial role. This relates to the in-between status of art I discussed in the

[70] According to Balibar (2004: 37), "national citizens can be persuaded that their rights do in fact exist if they see that the rights of foreigners are inferior, precarious or conditioned on repeated manifestation of allegiance".

[71] This observation is based on conversions I had with artists and activist working in south Tel Aviv, as well as my own temporary involvement in the activities of *The Garden Library.*

introduction, which makes art a privileged political practice used to challenge the police order's norms and values. This privilege in *The Garden Library* is translated into a responsibility, where Israeli-Jewish artists use their privilege both as citizens and as established artists to protect, give visibility to, and help mobilise those who lack the ability to become political subjects.[72] *The Garden Library* has become a safe zone for asylum seekers where an unwritten agreement between Arteam and the police force gives the artists and volunteers authority over the place. This agreement will later be updated (I will elaborate more in the fourth chapter) since the police collaborate with *The Garden Library*'s new management by providing patrols in the garden, and are in direct contact in case there are any disturbances in the library activity. This also comes from the interest of Tel Aviv municipality, as it allows a group of volunteers to take on social, cultural and educational roles that according to Arteam members, should be part of the services given by the city municipality. However it also reflects what I will further discuss in the fourth chapter as the residents' "right to the city" to be directly involved in the decision making processes regarding the production of public space and the promotion of spatial justice (Harvey, 2012; Lefebvre, 1991, 1996).

2.5 Summary

This chapter examined the production of new collective subjectivities in light of the current identity discourse and ethno-national structure in Israel. It outlined the social, political and historical conditions that have shaped communities in Israel already prior to the establishment of the state, and the

[72] I rely here on Tali Hatuka's (2012: 348) argument regarding Israeli-Jewish activists as privileged actors who take advantage of their citizenship to protect and enhance the appearance of Palestinians and the Palestinian struggle in the West Bank.

ways art practices have both affirmed and challenged these communities' values and ways of identification. This chapter also considered more recent factors, such as the impact of identity politics and the Israeli political structure as well as the neoliberlisation of Israeli politics and economy that have contributed to the polarisation of Israeli society based on national, ethnic and religious affiliations. However, as this chapter showed, national identity has remained the main prism that brings together or apart the subjects living in Israel. The examination of the Muslala, Empty House and Arteam projects in relation to the national-neo-liberal police order that determines the level of inclusion and exclusion within Israeli society have led to various conclusions. The different discussion each section had stemmed from the level of engagement each art collective took or did not take in relation to the Israeli national identity and narrative, and the relations between the art collectives, the space and community in which they wished to intervene.

Amongst the case studies, Muslala's, *The Meeting Point*, expressed clearly upon the divisive and antagonistic model of Israeli society by trying to achieve two main goals. The first is making visible the excluded or misrepresented narrative of the Mizrahi struggle as told by the Mizrahi residents of Musrara neighbourhood. The second was to improve the neighbourly relations between the Jewish Musrara (West) and Arab Musrara (East) through the re-enactment of a past moment of bi-national partnership and through emphasising the linguistic and cultural elements both Palestinian-Arab and Mizrahi-Jews share. The clash between Musrara residents and Muslala collective revealed issues which Muslala did not anticipate or fully realise when the collective first started working in the

neighbourhood. These issues included understanding themselves as a privileged group trying to take ownership on the material and symbolic resources of the neighbourhood and retell its story, and understanding the nuances and complexities required when searching for a Palestinian partner to their collaborative projects. While reflecting on their working process in the last *Meeting Point* (2015) event that took place outside of Musrara neighbourhood, Muslala successfully managed to work in collaboration with both the Jewish and Arab communities between Pat, Katamoninm and Beit Safafa neighbourhoods. However, the lack of revolutionary affects within this event made more explicit the type of multi-cultural and a-political, bi-national encounters that are allowed under the current national framework of the Israeli police order.

Empty House, *Kibbutz DIY*, was different from the rest of this chapter's case studies in the sense that it did not deal with the national and ethnic tensions that characterise the Israeli society. While the project's main theme – the Kibbutz – is of a totemic form that embodies the socialist and communal values of the first generations of young Zionist immigrants, Empty House emptied this form from its historical and political content. The collective relied on some of the form's ideological values, especially those of shared labour, pioneership and communal life, as a starting point to imagine new ways of living for the creative community in Jerusalem. As their writings stated, this was a conscious decision that aimed at overcoming the political public discourse and the demand for a clear political agenda. The analysis of this project highlighted several issues. While *Kibbutz DIY* was not political (in the sense of dealing with political content), it explored the possibilities of political

action by relocating it from the political sphere to the artistic one. Empty House embraced the sentiments and affective qualities that have prompted ten thousand of young protesters to occupy public spaces in the summer of 2011, as a means of building up a new movement that responds to the difficulties of art practitioners in Jerusalem. This project also allowed to consider artistically the meanings of collective action within a field that has often valued the work of the singular artist in their isolated studio, and the ways this collective action opens the possibilities for new creative experimentations which expand the sites of art production and circulation. Similar to the J14 movement, *Kibbutz DIY* demonstrated how these possibilities were enabled by putting aside the antagonistic elements of Israeli society and focusing on some of the consensual issues, mostly around the high cost of living and the affordable housing shortage, in order to build a mass movement. And while it did allow an updated version of communal life in a neo-liberal world it has remained within the cultural and linguistic limits of the Israeli-Jewish society, thus predetermining the types of participants and audience who would be interested in taking part of *Kibbutz DIY*.

The last case of ARTEAM presented a different kind of community production that went beyond the dominant ethno-national conflict of Israeli society. While *The Garden Library* did respond to one of the consequences of this conflict – the lack of a coherent and human policy towards asylum seekers who arrive in Israel – it offered a different type of artistic and communal constellation. The project's main aim was to offer a cultural shelter for the asylum seekers communities. The experimentation with new sets of references and values,

through the multi-lingual library and the production of festive and multicultural events that represent the asylum-seekers' home culture and languages, however enabled the production of a transnational community that challenged the national and neo-liberal order in Israel. Analysing the cultural activities taken place in *The Garden Library*, this section demonstrated the role of aesthetic practices in redistributing the sensible, through the transformation of neglected garden space in south Tel Aviv and the subjectivisation of asylum seekers into creative and political subjects.

Another element that was discussed in relation to *The Garden Library*, but is relevant to the rest of the case studies is the privileged position art and Israeli-Jewish artists have in responding through their work to issues that in other contexts might have been received differently. In *The Garden Library* it was the production of art space that literally protected the asylum seekers from being harassed and arrested by the police; in, *Kibbutz DIY*, the conceptualisation of this form of squat as an artwork prevented it from being evacuated; and in *The Meeting Point*, the collective's intention to cultivate the neighbourhood gave them an initial permission to explore excluded histories and narratives. These cases demonstrate art's non-static position and its ability to navigate between different systems of knowledge and power and offer new insights on sensitives issues. These cases also show how it is often difficult to separate art's privileged position from other privileges, such as class, ethnicity and nationality, that affect the level of artistic freedom that is granted under a given police order. For some art collectives, such as Empty House and ARTEAM these privileges were helpful means to achieve their artistic and political aims, and for others, such as in case of Muslala, it

has become an obstacle. In relation to this chapter's focus, this is another example of the ways art, identity and politics are intertwined in Israel.

3. A-Centric Constellations: Musrara as a Case Study

In the second chapter, I discussed the ways in which the production of new collective subjectivities using socially engaged and collaborative art practices challenge the identity discourse of the Israeli police order. Continuing the examination of transversality as an aesthetic model, this chapter is dedicated to the second aspect of transversality discussed in the introduction, which is the construction of a-centric or rhizomatic constellations. It is relevant to this research aim of providing an alternative reading of Israeli art in relation to politics. While the second chapter examined selected case studies in light of the national and neo-liberal police order in Israel, this chapter focuses on the ways socially engaged and collaborative art practices produce aesthetic objects and experiences that undermine the representational regime of Israeli art. It analyses the Muslala project *The Black Panthers' Road* (2011), created in Musrara neighbourhood with the collaboration of the neighbourhood's residents, former members of the Israeli Black Panthers movement, and artists who were invited to create public work as part of this project. This project consisted of public artworks distributed around the Musrara neighbourhood that responded to the political and cultural legacy of the Black Panthers movement in Israel, which was active during the early to mid 1970s. The artworks created a walking path around the streets and alleys of Musrara neighbourhood, and was given the name The Black Panthers' Road. The project included the re-naming of a nameless alley to 'they are not nice' alley, referring to the former Prime Minister Golda Meir's (labour) opinion on the Black Panthers' members; installing ceramic tiles with

the Black Panthers' symbol (black hand fist) on houses where the movement members used to live; a reissuing of the movement's first fanzine; and the printing of the Black Panthers' symbol on t-shirts that were handed out during the opening ceremony of this project. It received local media coverage and from the perspective of the collective and the neighbourhood members, the project was regarded as a great success. By looking at *The Black Panthers' Road*, this chapter focuses on Muslala as a site of art margin from two aspects. The first is the expansion of the physical spaces of art production and consumption. The second, is the articulation of a new aesthetic constellation that absorbs the different historical, cultural and political layers of Musrara neighbourhood, and as a result challenge notions of locality and authenticity that are central to the mainstream Israeli art narrative.

This chapter opens with a discussion on the construction of the Israeli art narrative, focusing on the retrospective art exhibition *The Want of the Matter as a Quality in Israeli Art* (1986) at Tel Aviv Museum, which framed Israeli modern art – styles, genres, art groups, institutions and geographic locations – under a dialectic local/universal model. It then continues with an overview of the main critical voices that emerged within Israeli art discourse during the 1990s. It looks at the exhibition, *Routes of Wandering: Nomadism, Journeys, and Transitions in Israeli Art* (1991), shown at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and the exhibition catalogue written by the exhibition curator Sarit Shapira, who introduced the concept of the rhizome to the Israeli reader. As further elaborated, the rhizome is a system of thought developed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) that is based on principles of multiplicity, heterogeneity and a non-linear approach. The rhizome creates new transversal and

relational connections between disparate and similar times, spaces, bodies, actions ideas, and events without binding them under a single fixed thesis, author, theme or ideology (Colman, 2005). It therefore asks “how things connect rather than how they ‘are’” (Lorraine, 2005: 147). The rhizome was used by Shapira (1991) to critically intervene within mainstream Israeli art narrative and its dialectic model by drawing inspiration from the works of Jewish scholars who lived outside of Israel, and adopted a nomadic and de-territorialised position towards land and home. By examining both canonical and critical discourses, I argue that the dialectic model that is the basis of the representational regime of Israeli art and maintains its binary tension between local-universal by which Israeli art objects are evaluated and judged, has remained unchallenged. Instead, I offer transversality as an alternative aesthetic model from which to reconfigure new a-centric tempo-spatial constellations. One of the ways I will demonstrate this model is by examining new universes of references and values that influence and shape art practice in Israel. As a result, the second part of this chapter examines the politics and aesthetics of the Black Panthers’ movement, and their impact on mainstream and alternative politics and culture in Israel. By using a transversal model, I suggest other qualities, references and values to evaluate Muslala’s *Black Panthers’ Road* that is situated in multiple domains, such as the artistic, political, educational and social. These qualities are different from the fixed categories that are constituted by the police order and the representational regime of art. They are defined by affective terms of sensibilities, intensities, and possibilities, rather than binary and hierarchical categories. As a result, this chapter can be seen as an experience within a

rhizomatic type of writing, where I draw new connections between several locations, events, ideas and figures that were intertwined in *The Black Panthers' Road* during a certain time and place into a new aesthetic assemblage.[73] Following the loosening of certain strands within this assemblage due to the short duration of the project and the leaving of the Muslala collective from the Musrara neighbourhood later in 2014, I also follow their movement into other possible constellations.

3.1 Narrative and Counter-Narrative in the Israeli Art Discourse

3.1.1 *The want of the matter* and the Bifurcation of the Israeli-Jewish Society

In the introduction, I briefly explained how the dialectic model adopted by Israeli art historians, critics and curators have shaped the hierarchical system of Israeli art based on location, themes, styles and mediums. I demonstrated this model in the second chapter when I discussed the production of the new Israeli, Zionist, Hebrew subject. Specifically, I referred to different artistic trends and mediums, such as modernist landscape paintings from the 1920s and photographs, and political posters documenting the building of new Jewish settlements and portraying the new pioneers. These examples show different approaches towards the land of Israel, the Zionist project and Modernism. They depict different visions of living a new life on a new land – visions that related to the reconnection to the biblical promised lands, modern explorations and discoveries of wild and native spaces, as well as the development of these spaces by the Zionist project (Manor, 2005[a]).

[73] This term is used by both Ranciére (2011) as the last stage that constitutes the aesthetic community (see introduction), and by Delueze and Guattari (1987) as one of the characteristics that form the rhizome (discussed in this chapter).

These examples also show complicated relations towards the new land and its inhabitants, which are based both on feelings of fascination and attraction – to the ‘old’ and ancient or to the raw, empty and virgin – as well as feelings of alienation and dislocation (Zalmona, 2014). Alongside artists who have praised the qualities of the light, topography and the residents, some artists, such as Itzhak Danziger and Reuven Rubin, experienced difficulties in acclimatising to the new place, and even returned to Europe for different periods of time (Zalmona, 2013).

In this chapter I focus on the spatial aspect of the dialectic model of Israeli art that is mostly concerned with relations between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. I have already mentioned the competitive history between both cities over the artistic agenda and its relation to Jewish tradition and the Zionist project. Here I focus on the exhibition from 1986, *The Want of the Matter as a Quality in the Israeli Art*, curated by Sara Breitberg-Semel in Tel Aviv Museum of Art. It is not only one of the most comprehensive attempts to summarise the local-universal dialectic within Israeli art, but it also elaborates on the dichotomy between art from Tel Aviv and art from Jerusalem. In the exhibition and catalogue, Breitberg-Semel (1986) defined the main guidelines for what constitutes local Israeli art – with a focus on painting, which seemed to her the most popular medium used by Jewish artists – as well as identifying specific biographical characteristics of the artists responsible for creating this type of art. *The Want of the Matter as a Quality in the Israeli Art*, examined paintings, and some sculptures and installations, from the 1960s until the 1980s, that were made by Israeli-born Jewish artists who lived, studied and worked in Tel Aviv under the mentorship of the artist Raffi Lavie. Lavie was a

renowned artistic and educational figure who taught at Hamidrasha School of Art (figure 37). This school was founded in 1946 and in its first two decades was located in Tel Aviv, until it moved to its current location in Beit Berl village in central Israel. As such, the Hamidrasha location was posited as the counter-art-school to Bezalel School of Arts and Design in Jerusalem. The generation of artists depicted in *The Want of The Matter* exhibition belonged to what Bretiberg-Semel described as the "inner and protected circle" of Israel, "members of the youth-movement of the Kibbutz, the essence of 'the first Israel'"[74] (Breitberg-Semel, 1986: online). Their artistic styles were defined by the use of cheap and found materials, plywood painting and collage, as well as the adoption of a rationalist, restrained and modest approach towards painting. Breitberg-Semel argued that although this style was developed in the West and was associated with artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly, Paul Klee and the art group CoBrA, it was adapted to the unique characteristics of the local Israeli landscape, that was committed to a secular, pioneering and socialist ethos, as well as to the a-materialistic and a-aesthetic legacy of Jewish tradition (Ibid).[75]

[74] An informal term to describe the first generation of native Israeli-Jews who grew up in modern cities, Kibbutzim and Moshavim, and received a socialist Zionist education. This is opposed to 'the second Israel' that refers to the mass wave of immigration following the establishment of Israel, mostly from Arab countries who were settled in neighbourhoods previously inhabited by Palestinians-Arabs or in new cities in the Israeli geographic periphery. I will elaborate more on this socio-ethnic division in the next section.

[75] Connecting the 'want of the matter' thesis with Jewish sources has to do more with modern trends than a substantial return to tradition. It can be argued that this type of connection has already been given validation within the cosmopolitan discourse of modern art. See for example, Robert Pincus-Witten's (1975) essay "Six Propositions on Jewish art" that was published in *Arts Magazine*. Pincus-Witten associated modern styles, such as abstraction, minimalism and conceptualism with one of the Ten Commandments prohibiting Jews from making representational images or sculpture.

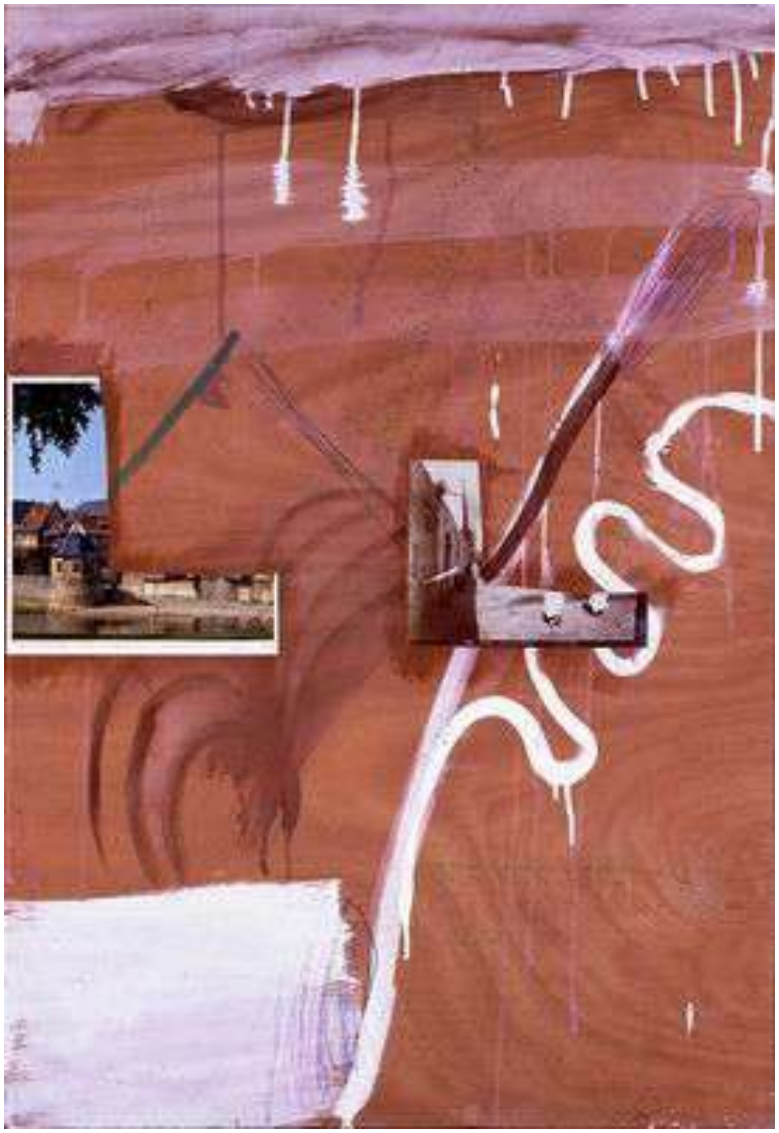

Figure 37. Raffi Lavie, *Untitled*, 1977. Jerusalem: Israel Museum.

As the then curator of Tel Aviv museum, one of the two leading art museums in Israel, Breitberg-Semel was aware of other artistic styles during that period which aimed at gaining artistic dominance. Most notably, a decade of conceptual art, performance and site-specific work during the 1970s was associated with artists who studied and worked in Jerusalem and with the Israel Museum in Jerusalem curators' agenda (Harari, 2017; Omer, 1998). The dialectic tension Breitberg-Semel presented, therefore, was not just between here (the local) and there (the universal),[76] but also between two

[76] "'There' is the aesthetics, 'there' is the great culture of the west. There the materials have soul and meaning, the wine is the blood, the bread is the body, the cross is the

different local sensory realities. This is understood in terms of both a generational rebellion between the previous generation of Jewish artists who immigrated to Israel mostly from Europe, and as an artistic confrontation with other young artists who adopted a different artistic approach. Although there were works depicted in *The Want of the Matter* exhibition by artists who were not part of the Tel Aviv, young, Midrasha school scene, they were simply framed under the marginal and relational title “the Want of the Matter – Other approaches”.

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned that even critical approaches on ‘the want of the matter’ thesis did not challenge the dialectic model upon which it was articulated. An example is a special issue of the *Studio* journal for art published in 1993. This issue was dedicated to conceptual art made in Israel during the 1970s. It was an attempt to challenge some of Israeli art’s assumptions, especially in relation to the dominant art medium (*The Want of the Matter* painting), centre (Tel Aviv), leading figures (Breitberg-Semel) and politics. The issue was dedicated to performance, site-specific, and land art created in Israel during the 1970s, mostly in the Jerusalem area, by Bezalel students and graduates who responded to the political turbulences of that decade. The issue was edited by Ofrat, who is described in an article written by art critic and theorist Ariella Azoulay (1993: 9) as the representative of the art field margins.[77] While this issue highlighted the margins of artistic

redemption. Here the materials are poor, insignificant, and therefore they are a rich source for art. Here is the abstraction, here is the thought that is liberated from symbols” (Breitberg-Semel, 1986: online).

77 Ofrat (2014: online) identifies himself as an underdog historian of Israeli art. In his first comprehensive account on Israeli art, *100 Years of Art in Israel* (1998), he starts with an overview of the art and craft scene in Palestine before the establishment of Bezalel. However, this chapter is framed under the title “Pre-history: art and craft in Eretz Israel in the nineteenth-century” thus excluding this era as part of the formal historical account of Israeli art (Ibid).

practices, it did not aim to challenge the dichotomy model of place, styles and figures, or what was already declared as the dominant voice in Israeli art.[78]

The significance of *The Want of the Matter* exhibition was not just in framing the history of Israeli art under a fixed and unchallenged model. In fact, the artistic style that Breitberg-Semel depicted in this exhibition was no longer the dominant one. The mid-1980s marked the beginning of postmodern art in Israel (Ofrat, 2015; Zalmona, 2013). Artists adopted a neo-expressionist approach to painting, and experimented with other mediums such as video art, and large scale installations. On a thematic level, artists expanded their interests into other subjects, such as sexuality, ethnicity, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the deterioration of the Zionist socialist ethos. These artistic tendencies can point to larger socio-political changes within Israeli society that emerged out of a critique towards the Zionist and socialist collective from a national-religious (neo-Zionism) position and a liberal-secular (post-Zionism) position (Ram, 2008). In this sense, as argued by Ofrat (2015, 2018[a]), *The Want of the Matter* was the last attempt to define a territorialised and unified voice in Israeli art.

What, then, was the other contribution of *The Want of the Matter* to the Israeli art discourse? When looking at the broader socio-political changes that occurred in Israel since the end of the 1970s and during the 1980s, it can be argued that the other objective of the *The Want of the Matter*

[78] "However, the story is not simple at all. It is not enough that Gideon Ofrat will write a chapter on the 1970s as he sees it, as he thinks fit to write it in order to fix the injustice and falsification, if there were indeed injustice and falsification caused. Because even then, Sara Breitberg's perspective will stay different and preferable than that of Ofrat. It is preferable not because Breitberg is a better or reliable interpreter of Israeli art, but because it is the cultural hegemony perspective in which Sara Breitberg is its significant articulator" (Azoulay 1993: 9).

exhibition was to reaffirm and reinforce the status of Tel Aviv as the artistic, secular and cosmopolitan capital of Israel. According to Manor (2008) after the national-liberal Likud party won the Israeli elections in 1977, the image of Tel Aviv as the watchtower of liberal, secular and socialist values deepened. Despite the economically liberal tendencies of the Likud party which was later adopted by large segments of the left and centre parties, the electoral change in 1977 also marked the formation of a new right-wing coalition between the national-liberal, ultra-orthodox, and national-religious party. The first right-wing government under the leadership of PM Menachem Begin declared in 1980 that 'United Jerusalem' is the capital of Israel, and continued to expand Israeli territories beyond the internationally recognised borders of Israel (Nitzan-Shiftan, 2007).[79] Creating art in Tel Aviv has become both an aesthetic and political form of identification with the progressive, peace-seeking, plural and secular society (Manor, 2008; Nitzan-Shiftan, 2007).

There were two other events that have contributed to the formation of an 'alternative capital' in Israel and which have reinforced the binary and often antagonistic relations between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The first was the assassination of PM Yitzhak Rabin (labour) by a religious Jew in 1995 during a peace rally in Tel Aviv. Within research on Israeli art and sociology, this event was described in terms of shock and trauma that have deepened the antagonistic relations between the two main ideological groups in Israel

[79] This declaration was bound under a basic law titled 'Jerusalem, the capital of Israel'. Israeli Knesset has constituted a basic law (in the absence of constitution in Israel, 'basic laws' hold a legal prioritised status over 'regular laws'.) titled 'Jerusalem, the Capital of Israel' which establishes the status of Jerusalem as the official capital of Israel;the 'Jerusalem' law secures it the city's unity under Israeli sovereignty, its being the seat of the Knesset and the Supreme Court, as well as as the rights of all religions to practice their faith in Jerusalem (Mayer and Mourad, 2008; Knesset [b]; Knesset [c].

(post-Zionist and neo-Zionist), and produced a division between the political elite (right and religious nationalists) and the cultural elite (secular and progressive liberals) (Arieli-Horowitz, 2005; Ram, 2007; Vinitzky-Seroussi, 2000). In her research on the impact of Rabin's assassination on Israeli art, Arieli-Horowitz (2005) argues that it has brought a collective artistic reaction from artists who usually avoid treating political issues in their work. Yet when looking at the list of the artists interviewed in Arieli-Horowitz' research it can be suggested that the artists that were most affected by Rabin assassination came from the same Tel-Avivian, secular, left-leaning environment, which mostly consisted of Ashkenazi male artists. Arieli-Horowitz (2005: 6) is aware of "the homogeneity of the art community" that "calls for a separate study". However, Arieli-Horowitz also contributes to the affirmation of this homogeneity by identifying this assassination as an event that has shaped an entire decade of Israeli art. Religious or right-leaning artists, for example, were exempted from this study simply because their work did not respond to Rabin's assassination (Ibid). It is important to note that this study was published during a time of heated debates around 'the religious question' in art where more art critics and historians have pointed at the exclusion of religious and right-wing artists from the Israeli art discourse (Eydar, 2018; Sperber, 2010). These arguments were then revoked by other scholars who are affiliated with the homogeneous art community claiming that artists who practice religion and/or are affiliated with the political hegemony are incapable of creating 'good art' (Ofrat, 2003, 2011; Amir, 2004).[80] Within this

[80] Ofrat (2003: 150), for example, argued that "Right wing wealthy people can keep funding platforms, such as 'Tchelet' [a religious and right wing oriented journal] and Shalem centre [a research centre based in Jerusalem with a conservative approach to politics and economy], where conservative and religious thought can be promoted. However, no money can grow a good right wing artist". Ellen Ginton (cited in Amir, 2004: online), a curator for Israeli art in Tel Aviv museum told in an interview: "I have never seen an

context and given the lack of a serious study (beyond the generalising art statements provided in this debate) that aims to understand the cultural void within religious and conservative art communities in regards to Rabin's assassination, Arieli-Horowitz' area of study can be seen as another means of policing the distribution of the sensible within Israeli art.[81] It validates the representational regime of Israeli art's assumption on where art is created and by whom, and produces stylistic and thematic criteria that justify the inclusion of some artists and the exclusion of others.

The second event that strengthened the cultural and historical status of Tel Aviv was the 2003 UNESCO declaration of Tel Aviv as the 'White City' for being the site with the largest accumulation (about 4000) of residential and commercial structures built in the Bauhaus or early modern 'International Style' (Flahive, 2018). This declaration officially validated previous Israeli attempts to canonise the narrative of Tel Aviv as 'The White City' (Rotbard, 2015). For example, the 1984 exhibition *White City: International Style Architecture in Israel, a Portrait of an Era* curated by Michael Levin in Tel Aviv museum and later at the Jewish Museum in New York; a conservation plan for Tel Aviv 'Internationalist Style' structures drafted by the first Chief Conservation Architect for the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality, Nitza Szmuk; and the inauguration of the 1994 'Bauhaus in Tel Aviv' festival (Ibid). The 'White City' was marked by the historical pre-1948 borders of Tel Aviv which

artwork that was created outside of the 'green line' [the 1967' border between Israel and Jordan] that was worth showing in the museum". In a panel discussion on the subject of art, war, and propaganda that took place in 2003, artist Yair Garbuz (cited in Amir, 2004: online) argued that amongst right wing artists "there is not one drop of sense of humour and self reflection".

81 One can argue that the disengagement plan from Gaza 2005 followed by the evacuation of Gaza's settlements and some in the West Bank, triggered a similar emotional and artistic response in the national-religious art communities the same way the Rabin's assassination evoked amongst secular and Tel Avivian artists. See, for example, Shenker, 2016.

included the central and old northern neighbourhoods. This declaration has two main political and cultural meanings that are relevant to this thesis. This declaration first contributes to the distribution of the Israeli space in terms of resources and perseveration, by investing more in the restoration and improvements of infrastructure in the central and northern neighbourhoods than in the southern neighbourhood of Tel Aviv and Jaffa. This unequal distribution of wealth does not only ignore the presence, for example, of International Styled houses in south Tel Aviv and Jaffa, but also erase – narratively and physically – the presence of other architectural and urban landscapes (Fellahin, 2018). At the same time, by associating the history of Tel Aviv with the small historical segment of the Bauhaus during the 1920s and the 1930s, this narrative disconnects Tel Aviv from the colonial practices imposed by the Israeli police order. In this sense, as Nitzan-Shiftan (2000) argues, the 'White City' narrative has become a form of 'white washing'. Ram (2005) outlines the numerous cultural and socio-political meanings affiliated with this 'whiteness' of Tel Aviv, such as the white sands from which the first neighbourhood of Tel Aviv emerged (Ahuzat Bayit in 1909, is literary translated to 'house estate' in Hebrew), or the white sea shore that enables Israel an access to the West. The white also refers to the modern, minimalist and clean architecture that was dominant in Tel Aviv, in contrast to the Arab decorative architecture that was dominant in Jaffa. Following the 1995 Rabin's assassination and Benjamin Nethanyahu (Likud) winning the 1996 election, Tel Aviv's whiteness was also positioned against the 'blackness' of Jerusalem. This type of blackness was associated with the black outfit worn by the ultra-orthodox of Jerusalem, but more generally to the mountainous

typography and walled architecture of the city that have signified Jerusalem's conservative, national and religious character (Ibid).

I looked at some important cultural and political landmarks the have contributed to the formation of a dialectic and often antagonistic model from which Tel Aviv and Jerusalem are perceived. This model is built upon several layers of meanings and qualities that characterise each city, starting with a typographical and historical comparison and continuing with a comparison based on the stylistic elements and ethics each city promotes. The way the representational regime of Israeli art sorts its modes of categorisation and perceptions, is similar to the way the police order maintains its power by legitimising its distribution of the sensible as the natural way of things. This is seen, for example, by the way historical facts and counter-cultural phenomena can be ignored if they do not fit within the architectural and cultural history of Tel Aviv or the secular and Western-oriented history of Israeli art. It is important to note, however, that alongside attempts to reiterate the dialectic model of Tel Aviv/Jerusalem, local/universal, Israel/Jewish, white/black and secularism/religion, there has been a gradual increase of critical study on Israeli art historiography. This critical discourse is seen both within the mainstream art institutions, such as major museums and galleries and the academic art departments, and both in alternative and independent constellations. I will look at some of these studies in the following sections. These include institutional and alternative attempts to revisit or recontextualise Israeli art history, include other artistic voices and themes, into the canon, and create new sensory realities by expanding the sites of art production and display.

3.1.2 A Rhizomatic Reading of Israeli Art – *Routes of Wandering* and Beyond

Parallel to critical academic discourses on the Israel-Jewish police order since the 1990s, there was a similar emergence of critical debates regarding Israeli art historiography, especially around Breitberg-Semel's dialectic model and its understanding of local-universal relations. They were largely developed in the fields of Sociology and Anthropology, and visual and cultural studies, and were mainly discussed on the pages of two new critical platforms, *Theory and Criticism* and *Studio* journals, which adopted post-structuralist, post-colonial and post-Zionist approaches. Earlier critical voices pointed out the various political, social and economic conditions that shaped Israeli art and visual culture in general. These voices were diverse and examine, for example, the ways art institutions tend to neutralise the political and critical aspect in the work of art, focusing only on aesthetic analysis (Azoulay, 1992); the ways mainstream art discourse reinforces national identity and becomes defined by it (Khinski, 1993); and the ways it has excluded the sensory realities of marginalised national, ethnic and gendered groups within Israeli society (Khinski, 2006; Shohat, 1989; Sperber, 2011). Within major art institutions, there was an increase in exhibitions attempting to re-contextualise Israeli art within new sets of references and values. This includes exhibitions such as, *The Female Presence* (1990), and *Routes of Wandering: Nomadism, Journeys, and Transitions in Israeli Art* (1991) which I discuss further in the following paragraphs, and *To The East: Orientalism in the Arts in Israel* (1998).

Before elaborating more on the *Routes of Wandering* exhibition, I will introduce the concept of the rhizome which provides the basis of this

exhibition as well as this chapter. This concept will be used here both as a framework from which to look at the ways ideas, figure, objects, times and places are configured within the Israeli art discourse, as well as the actual form of this chapter's main case study, *The Black Panther*, discussed further on. Taken from biology, rhizome refers to the subterranean stem system that is consisted of roots, shoots bulbs and tubers. In their collaborative work, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 5) adopt the model of a subterranean stem as a system of thoughts and more broadly as "the image of the world". On a philosophical level, rhizome opposes dialectic thought arguing that dialectic thought contradicts the multiple and circular ways in which nature works (Ibid). However, in contrast to plants, the rhizome is a-centric as it lacks a principle root (source, beginning) or a tip (final destination).[82] The forms of a rhizomatic system are lines, bulbs and tubers which contain various intensities and speed. This form consists of "indefinite multiplicity of secondary roots grafts onto it and undergoes a flourishing development" (Ibid: 7-8). Alongside this metaphorical description of the rhizome, Deleuze and Guattari (Ibid) identify several characteristics of the rhizome as a system of thought. The most relevant to this discussion are connection and heterogeneity which constitute collective assemblages of enunciation; multiplicity as substantive in the sense that nothing is related to only one subject, object or reality, be it natural or spiritual; a-signifying rupture which affects the continuation of a rhizome and can lead to the creation of new lines or a temporary pause of the old lines;

[82] Rhizome is always in the middle, in between, but middle does not mean a compromise or an average but "where things pick up speed […] a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 25).

and cartography as the palette of the rhizome. The form of a map, in contrast to the rooted and representational act of tracing, does not assume a goal or final destination. The map consists of multiple entryways and exits and can be modified, reversed, torn and adapted by individuals and collectives, and can take the form of a drawing, an art object, a political action or a mediation. This rhizomatic map is characterised with short-term memory in the sense that it is not bound to unified and territorialised concepts, such as family, nation, or civilisation, but rather to "conditions of discontinuity, rupture, and multiplicity" (Ibid: 16). These qualities thus offer a system in which to "think with the world, rather than thinking about the world" (Holland, 2013: 37). The type of knowledge produced from a rhizomatic way of thinking and acting is referred to by Deleuze and Guattari (1980) as a 'nomadic science' or 'nomadology'. According to Al-Shaikh's (2009: 767) interpretation of Delueze and Guattari, nomadology is "an ambulant science that gradually evolves as a result of engaging with life and participating in *creating* the pedestrian truth". It stands in contrast to 'royal science' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) produced by the police order (using Rancière's term) as one of its means of policing its distribution of the sensible.

The exhibition *Routes of Wandering* held at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem in 1991 introduced the rhizome as a possible system to reconfigure Israeli art. It was the first exhibition curated by Sarit Shapira, a recent graduate in art history from Tel Aviv university. The exhibition explored several themes of wandering, routes, diaspora and nomadism in relation to the territorialised concepts which are politically charged within the Israeli context, such as home, land, border and identity (Shapira, 1991: 245-239). The exhibition

depicted multidisciplinary artworks referring to nomadic biblical figures, such as Cain, Abraham and Noah, Jewish myths such as the Exodus and the journey in the desert to the promised land, as well as to the medieval European myth of the 'wandering Jew', alongside other themes relating to language and syntax. The exhibition depicted the works of twenty two Israeli artists, most of them were already well established in the Israeli art canon, such as Yitzhak Danziger, Moshe Kupferman, Yigal Tumarkin, Micha Ullman, Moshe Gershuni and Pinchas Cohen Gan, and some who would find a central place within the field, such as Larry Abramson, Nurit David, Aim Deuelle Luski and Moshe Ninio (Ibid). The uniqueness of this exhibition – which did not introduce marginal and unknown artists or necessarily new artworks – was with the re-contextualisation of the works under a theme that did not get enough attention within Israeli art institutions. Instead of searching for new local and unique qualities the 'local' and its dialectic encounter with the 'universal' (as Breitberg-Semel did with *The Want of the Matter* exhibition), *Routes of Wandering* explored the lack of centre, a concrete place and the longing for unidentified or non existent 'there' (Ibid).

Routes of Wandering is part of an overall critical enquiry within art research that aims to decentralise and deconstruct the structures, axioms, values and behaviours of the aesthetic regime of Israeli art and its affiliation with the Israeli police order. For this purpose, Shapira (1991: 239-235) applied Deleuze and Guattari's theory of de-territorialisation and the rhizome as qualities that guide Israeli art, as opposed to the local-universal dialectic model. Not only did Shapira rely on post-structuralist theories that aim to deconstruct meanings of authenticity, locality and rootedness, but she used

the textual legacy of the Jewish diaspora, referring to the writings of Jewish scholars such as Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Edmond Jabès, George Steiner and Jacques Derrida. For the exhibition catalogue, Shapira (Ibid: 256-244) included an interview with Jabès conducted by artist and writer Bracha L. Ettinger, who also had a work shown in the exhibition. Jabès was a Jewish-Egyptian writer who received a French education in Cairo, left Egypt as part of the deportation of Egyptian-Jews after the Suez Crisis in 1956, and moved to Paris where he lived until his death. Influenced by Rabbinic and Kabbalistic texts, as well as his own biography, Jabès' works emphasised the de-territorial element of Jewish experience and the written text being the only home. In *Routes of Wandering* catalogue Shapira (Ibid: 225) referred to Jabès' theorisation of the 'desert' as a nomadic space that is "deprived of a human order that can populate and domesticate it". His understanding of the desert as a rupture and a space of multitude that consists of several modes of becoming (nomad, Israelite, Jewish), stands in contrast to the Israeli-Zionist conceptualisation of the desert as a transitional stage towards the formation of a territorialised nation-state.[83] Shapira (Ibid: 239) also referenced the German-Jewish scholar Rosenzweig whose identification of the Jewish people as 'a world people' is embedded with an ethical responsibility that "[prevent them] from establishing a connection to a place".

3.1.3 Between Dialectics and The Rhizome

The *Routes of Wandering* exhibition and its comprehensive catalogue are considered by art critics and curators to be an important landmark in Israeli

[83] Within the first decades of nation-state building, at a time where the melting pot was the main absorbing strategy, the term 'the desert generation' was used in sociological research in Israel to describe the first generation of Jewish immigrants to Israel whose local customs would disappear with the full integration of their children into the hegemonic culture (Kizel, 2014: 69).

art which challenged the cultural mode of thinking within art and society (Asheri and Riba, 2018; Ofrat, 2018[b]; Setter, 2018). They introduced a new theoretical framework from which to understand Israeli art and marked an institutional interest in artistic voices and themes that were largely excluded from Israeli art historiography. *Routes of Wandering* was criticised for being an act of appropriation. In a book exploring the power relations of the Israeli cultural hegemony through art which was published after her death, Khinski (2015) argues that the subversive and revolutionary content of the deterritorialised and nomadic theory was emptied in the exhibition, which holds a canonical position. It is an inherent paradox that has to do with the inability to map the geopolitical routes of migration and nomadism, especially within the Israeli-Palestinian space that is composed of checkpoints and gatekeepers as a means of restricting movement of Palestinians. Moreover, the exhibition focused on “states of nomadism within the Western culture” and as such excluded what has not been documented and historicised (nomadology, according to Deleuz and Guattari (1987) is the opposite of history) as well as actual artists who are marginal, migrants, refugees and nomads. Nomadism then becomes another artistic theme, an exotic image to be explored, which avoids contact with real border zones, no man’s land and frontiers (Khinksi, 2015).

The critical voices suggested by Shapira and Chinksy demonstrate the acceptance of the configuration of the representational regime of Israeli art. Despite the critical intervention that exposes the contingency of the dialectic model and the territorialised Zionist ideology that has reaffirmed it, they both perceived the Israeli art system in terms of binary categories. Shapira

suggested reframing works of art within a more universal and Jewish (as in diasporic) framework, without undermining their canonical position within the field. Khinski's critical focus on Israeli art hegemony made her overlook other artistic and cultural critical attempts which occur outside the cultural hegemony. When suggesting an alternative, Khinski (2015) turned to diasporic modern Jewish art and its attempt to construct a modern Jewish identity that was not bound to a territory or nationality as the anti-thesis of Israeli art. By doing this Khinski affirmed the centrality of the West and its modern, de-territorialised, idea which diasporic Jewish artists aim to be part of, in contrast to the local, territorialised and colonial subjectivity produced by the Israeli-Jewish order. Ignoring the art and cultural periphery can be found in the works of other critics who claim to be working from the margins. In an essay on the possibilities and limitations of critical art in Israel, the art critic Ariela Azoulay (1992), argues that the museums and galleries built in the geographical periphery of Israel, mostly contributes to the distribution of the representational regime instead of offering an alternative aesthetic configuration. Ofrat (2011) in a blog essay supports this argument and adds that it is not relevant to talk about marginal art in contemporary Israel any more. He argues that since the 1980s the Israeli art system has embraced the artistic voices of Mizrahi, Palestinian, LGBTQ and religious artists in the spirit of Western pluralism and multiculturalism.

Adopting a transversal approach to Israeli art thus aims not only to expose and discover art created in the cultural and geographical art margins. It suggests that the dialectic model of centre-periphery and local-universal can be overcome by mapping new connections between local and global,

mainstream and alternative narratives, traditions and histories. Many of the alternative and marginal art practices, and especially those which are discussed in this chapter, work to redistribute the sensible within new political and aesthetic constellations. Their extended presence in space and their conceptual and/or direct connection to political change and grassroots movements can indicate a different attitude towards power and political and artistic hegemony. I will demonstrate this argument in the following sections. The next section analyses the aesthetics and politics of the Black Panthers Movement, one of the main reference points for Muslala's *The Black Panthers' Road*. It will look at the ways the Black Panthers were perceived and represented by the Israeli police order during the time the movement was active (1970) and more recently when the movement's legacy was institutionalised. Through the partial embrace of the Black Panthers by the police order and the representational regime of Israeli art, I will highlight the problematic inclusion of this movement within the mainstream political and art discourse. I will also look at other discourses such as the Mizrahi art and political discourse that have continued the Mizrahi struggle for equality and recognition within other and more a-centric constellations. Alongside the discussion of the narrative and counter-narrative of Israeli art discourse, I will then move to map these universes of references and values within the rhizomatic space that was created in the Musrara neighbourhood during the inauguration of *The Black Panthers' Road*.

3.2 “Either the Cake will be Shared by All or there will be no Cake”[84] – The Aesthetic of The Black Panthers Movement in Israel

The Black Panthers movement was formed in the Musrara neighbourhood in 1971 by young Jews from Moroccan descent. The direct background for the emergence of this movement was the worsening socio-economic conditions within the neighbourhood that resulted in housing density and lack of basic utilities such as kitchens, toilets and showers; a high level of unemployment (about a third of the adult population) and dropout from primary and secondary schools (about 42%). Amongst those who found a job, 75% were paid below the average of what has been estimated to sustain a bigger household. And amongst the youth who studied about 16% were sent to elementary school with a low educational level. There were no higher education graduates from Musrara neighbourhood (Shalom Chetrit, 2004: 138-139). According to Shalom Chetrit (2004) the conditions for the Black Panthers insurgence were made possible due to the increasingly visible socio-economic disparity between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews in Israel, especially under the socialist Labour policy. The Black Panthers protesters, who were either born in Israel or had immigrated at a young age, were considered to be ‘the second generation’. Based on Israel’s ‘melting pot’ policy that was discussed in the second chapter, they should have been integrated within the new society and therefore enjoy the same national and social benefits regardless of their ethnicity. However, during the 1960s the socio-economic gaps between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews were fixated through a separated educational, welfare and housing system. This separate

[84] This quotation is associated with Saadia Marciano, one of the leaders of the Israeli Black Panthers.

system was justified by the Israeli police order through a series of sociological studies that identified the Mizrahi Jews as a “welfare case”, “care charged” and “the ethnic problem” (Shalom Chetrit, 2004: 119). The living conditions that were allocated to the Mizrahi Jews were, therefore, intended to fit their unique “socio-economic situation” and “ways of living” (Ibid). It is also important to note that these policies occurred during times of economic growth in Israel, especially after the 1967 Israel war and the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem. Following the war Israel invested in new real estate projects, for example in neighbourhoods around the Musrara area, as well as new industries, such as the military industry. However, this growth mostly benefited the middle class and wealthy Ashkenazi families (Shalom Chetrit, 2004). The unequal allocation of resources was also seen in Israel’s treatment of new European immigrants, mostly from the Soviet Union that were granted allowances and mortgages that enabled them to integrate within Israeli society within a relatively short period of time (Ibid).

As I show in the following paragraphs, the emergence of the Black Panthers movement in Israel was a significant and unprecedented moment of dissensus within the Israeli police order. It produced a rupture within the distribution of the sensible and enabled new aesthetic and political constellations to take form.[85] These constellations have undermined the axioms and premises upon which the Israeli-Jewish collective was

[85] Shalom Chetrit (2004: 119-120) identifies the emergence of the Black Panthers as a “collective contentious generating event” that divides the Mizrahi struggle for recognition and equality, but also more broadly the Israeli social and cultural public discourse, into two periods: before the Black Panthers and after the Black Panthers. One of the models Shalom Chetrit (2004) bases his analysis of the Mizrahi struggle in Israel is Sidney G. Tarrow’s model of social movement and contentious politics. According to Tarrow (Ibid: 16-20), a collective action becomes an contentious act when it is initiated by those who lack access to positions of power. This act raises unconventional arguments and demands through contentious means (from a violent form to non-violent forms of civil disobedience).

constructed, such as the unification of the Jewish diaspora in the land of Israel under a homogenised national and class identity (Ram, 2011: 63). The formation of a new political community by the Black Panthers have also moved beyond the confined physical, political and symbolic borders of the Israeli police order. This was mostly seen by creating new connections and alliances with other political communities, such as the Black Panther Party and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (Lubin, 2016). And lastly, the way the Black Panthers movement was reterritorialsed during the 1970s within new aesthetic constellations, such as the youth clubs and counter-theatre groups in the Jerusalem and South Tel Aviv slums, have continued both the political and aesthetic dissensus in Israel (Lev-Aladgem, 2007).

3.2.1 The Black Panthers and the Distribution of the Sensible

Prior to the first Black Panthers' demonstration on March 3, 1971 in front of Jerusalem City Hall, the movement's members have gone through "political process of subjectivation" (Rancière, 2010: 140). To describe the process of subjectivation and the way it enables the redistribution of the sensible within the order of things, Rancière provides an example of French workers from the 19th century who wrote poetry (Faulkner, 2014: 149; Roei, 2016: 145-146). As an act of rebellion against the police order's modes of identification and categorisation, the workers had decided to write poetry instead of resting at night (Ibid). Similar to Rancière's understanding of aesthetic art, which I have described in the introduction, the workers' subversive act or dissensus occurred during the moment they had decided to become *something else than* workers. This break within the order of things and from the role within the distribution of the sensible to which the workers were allocated, is what

constitutes the political subject. Similar process can be identified within the Black Panthers members. In her research on the Black Panthers in Israel, Deborah Bernstein (1984: 133) outlines the official profile of the movements members:

> All the youngsters were of Moroccan origin, around 18 to 20 years old. Most had dropped out of elementary school and had spent some time in institutions for juvenile delinquents. They were not accepted for compulsory military service due to their records of delinquency. None of them held a steady job. Some hardly worked; others worked intermittently at unskilled, low-paying jobs. They were part of the lumpenproletariat of Jerusalem's slums.

There were two main influential forces that contributed to the political subjectivation of the Black Panthers members. The first was a contact made with communal workers from the Community Work Division of the Jerusalem municipality that motivated the Musrara youth to actively demand their rights. This was a local and communal demand to improve the material and educational infrastructure of the neighbourhood (Shalom Chetrit, 2004). The second force was a contact made with members of the communist and anti-Zionist organisation Matzpen (compass in Hebrew). Through these meetings members of the Black Panthers contextualised their local struggle within a greater context of power relations within the Israeli state and more broadly a global anti-colonial and anti-imperialist Third World protest movements (Lubin, 2016). The occasional meetings with Matzpen members in a small café in Jerusalem called 'Ta'amon' exposed the Black Panthers members to a different sensory reality that was composed of listening to rock and protest music of British and American bands and reading revolutionary texts together (Shalom-Chetrit 2004: 140). These meetings and figures have enabled the Black Panthers members to elevate themselves beyond the police order's

categorisation of them as ‘marginal’, ‘at-risk’ or ‘deprived’ youth, and transform themselves into *something else*. “We want everyone to know that we are here”, the Black Panthers said during an interview to *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper on January 20, 1981 (cited in Bernstein, 1984: 134). By forcing visibility on the dominant group, the Black Panthers situated themselves within a dissensual space that was both shared with others (through their demand of being seen and heard by the national collective with which they affiliated themselves) but also kept separate (as they introduce new modes of distributing the sensible).[86]

One of the main ways in which the Black Panthers forced visibility was through their decision to call themselves after the African-American Black Panther Party. By doing that, the Israeli Black Panthers introduced the Israeli police order a new universe of references and values. It was fundamentally different from the national and territorialised collectivity produced by the Israeli police order, as it was built on a different type of alliance that was more heterogeneous. The connection the Israeli Black Panthers made with the African-American Black Panther Party was both material and ideological (Lubin, 2016). One of their first fliers “Musrara-Harlem” (Ibid: 78) expressed the rhizomatic element of making a transversal connection between distant

[86] There have been debates among scholars regarding the Black Panthers’ level of identification with the Israeli state and the Zionist Ideology. They never used the word ‘Zionism’ to describe their political agenda, but they also never identified themselves as anti-Zionist (Kizel, 2014). They emphasised their loyalty to the Israeli state (Member of the Black Panthers Reuven Abergel: “God forbid that 23 years of the State, and we contributed the major part to the building of the State, one bright day we find ourselves naked, with no cover”. In: Bernstein, 1984: 138). Yet this loyalty was conditioned on a reallocation of resource and demolishing the socio-economic gaps between Mirzahi and Ashkenazi Jews (Member of the Black Panthers Sa’adia Marciano: “If such share will *not* be achieved, then ...” Ibid; and Abergel: “We are loyal sons to the State, maybe not to its laws” Ibid: 141). The debate between scholars can be seen as a result of the multiplicity of voices that have constituted the Black Panthers movement and have impacted the different directions in which the individual members have taken after the dismantling of the movement.

places. This connection was based on an analysis made by the Israeli Black Panthers members, and was also reflected in policy papers and opinion articles produced by Zionist leaders and activists which argued that Jews from Arab and Muslim countries were brought as cheap labour to replace the native population (Lubin, 2016). Moreover, by declaring an alliance with the African-American Black Panther Party, a declaration that was also recognised by the latter, the Israeli Black Panthers connected themselves to a broader global network of anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggle (Ibid: 79).[87] They were the first group in Israel not only to acknowledge the necessity of combining national, class and ethnic struggles, but to make contact with the leadership of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation already in 1972 and recognised them as the legitimate leaders of the Palestinian people (Shalom Chetrit, 2004).[88]

Adopting the name Black Panthers, as well as the aesthetics of the African-American struggle such as the black clothing style and the black fist symbol, produced an antagonistic effect. Not only was this sensory reality foreign to the set of symbols and values that had constituted the Israeli police order and the unified mode of Jewish collectivity, but it was also interpreted by the Israeli government as an existential threat. Golda Meir, the then PM of Israel, accused the African-American Black Panther Party of anti-Semitism. This

[87] In April 1972, members of the Black Panthers movement participated in an assembly of revolutionary movements in Florence, Italy. One of the Israeli newspapers, *Ma'ariv*, described the assembly as an "international conference of terrorists" (Shalem Chetrit, 2004: 157). For a discussion on the way critique in Israeli policy is translated into a terrorist or anti-Semitic act. See also: Lubin, 2016.

[88] One of the quoted statements in this regard is by a Black Panthers member Kochavi Shemesh (who also participated in Muslala *Black Panthers Road*, and *Between Green and Red – the Meeting Point*) who said: "we agreed that the problems that the problem of the Mizrahim and of the Arabs are intertwined. There will be no equality and no chance for the Mizrahim as long as there's an occupation and a national struggle, and on the other hand, the national struggle will not be over as long as the Mizrahim are at the bottom of the ladder, and are practically an anti-Arab level" (Lubin, 2016: 78).

was mostly due to their vocal anti-Zionist critique and the way Israel's policy in the Occupied Territories was perceived by the Black Panther Party as an extension of imperial and capitalist U.S. policy (Lubin, 2016).[89] According to the Israeli Black Panthers' member Kochavi Shemesh (Shalom Chetrit, 2004: 142) adopting the Black Panther name was a deliberate strategy for visibility to their struggle: "the idea was to scare Golda. People told us she doesn't go to sleep at night because of this name, so we said, here we made it […] with this name we actually manage to change the entire discourse there was between protest movements and the establishment". The fear described by Shemesh had led to the Black Panthers' redistribution of the sensible to be completely denied by the police order (Hazan, 2013; Kizel, 2014). The government's antagonistic approach towards the Black Panthers movement was expressed through actions that aimed to prevent visibility to its movement and demands. These include, for example, denying the Black Panthers leaders request to hold their first demonstration in front of Jerusalem city council and conducting pre-emptive arrests of some of its leader (3.3.71); by delegitimising the authority of the Black Panthers members in a meeting conducted with then Prime Minister Golda Meir who insisted on asking them personal questions thus refusing to acknowledge them as a collective movement (13.4.71); by using violent means to disperse the Black Panthers' second demonstration which had around 5000-7000 demonstrators who blocked the main transportation routes in central Jerusalem (18.5.71) (Shalom Chetrit, 2004: 142); and by providing a

[89] This critique was mostly circulated in the Black Panther Party newspaper *Black Panther Intercommunal News Agency* followed the 1967' war which created a split between American Jews and Blacks, but also within the Black Liberation Movement. For a while the *Black Panther Intercommunal* was the main American news source on the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza. It also provided a platform for Palestinian leaders such as Yasser Arafat and Geroge Habsh (Lubin, 2016).

negative visual depiction of the Black Panthers in mainstream Israeli media which increased "the social panic and fear of them" (Hazan 2013: 51).[90]

Nonetheless, the Black Panthers managed to produce "a dissensual re-configuration of the common experience of the sensible" (Rancière, 2010: 140). They introduced a new language of protest and radicalism, such as using the term 'police state' to describe Israel and accused it for its racist and discriminatory policy. They identified the ways in which the police order tried to co-opt them by offering, for example, political positions in various Labour organisations and committees (Ibid: 149). They contentiously produced sensory clashes through demonstration, hunger strikes, and tactical interventions within the public space of Jerusalem. A well known example was the 'Milk Operation' (14.03.1972) where members of the movement took milk bottles distributed in the wealthy neighbourhood of Rehavia and placed them on the threshold of houses located in the Jerusalem slums known then as the Asabastonim (today Kiryat Yovel). A note was attached to the bottles saying: "'Operation Milk' to the slums' kids. These kids don't find the milk they need behind their doors every morning. Compared to them, there are dogs and cats in the rich neighbourhoods who enjoy unlimited amount of milk" (Shalom Chetrit, 2004: 156). Another intervention within the Israel-Jewish sensory experience is seen through the alternative Passover Haggada written and performed by the Black Panthers' members during the holiday of Passover in 1971. Traditionally, the Haggada is used to tell the story of Exodus prior to the festive feast. In the new Black Panthers' adaptation, the Haggada told the journey of Moroccan-Jews to Israel and their new life within

[90] Some of the questions had to do with their family status, their parent's occupation, their educational and criminal background and their smoking habits (Shalom Chetrit, 2004).

'the promised land'. In a relaunching event of the Black Panthers Haggada in April 2019, the Black Panther member Reuven Abergel described the night the Haggada was written in manners that resembled Ranciére 19th Century French workers/poets (Haoketz, 2019: online):

> We met five Black Panthers around noon in a dark tin shack in […] Musrara […]. We all threw sentences in the air when Rafi [Marciano] was sitting on the floor and typing with an old type writer. We did not have an experience in typing, and since the letters were arbitrarily scattered on the machine, there were many typos […]. We worked on the Haggada for several hours until it became dark. When we finished writing, we had six papers in our hands and we were happy with the results. The typing was made directly on a stencil paper so we can print it immediately with the stencil machine we had in our headquarter [the dark tin shack], a machine we stole from the Independent Liberal Party headquarter on Hilel st. […]. We printed one hundred copies and we priced it at one lira, which was more than the regular Hagadda price. When we approached business owners and offered them to buy our Haggada they surpassed themselves and gave us more than what we asked for, as a donation to our struggle.

3.2.2 The Black Panthers' Legacy in Israeli Visual Culture and Politics – Between Mainstream and Alternative

The political legacy of the Black Panthers was well documented in different platforms, such as academic journals, *Notebooks for Research*[91] *and Criticism, Theory and Criticism,* alongside several documentary films and TV programmes.[92] Some scholars even credit The Black Panthers for the paradigm shift that occurred in Israeli academia, especially in the fields of Sociology and Anthropology, concerning the transition from modern positivist

[91] Was first published in 1978 by radical researchers from the Department of Sociology in Haifa university. It was an independent journal that was edited, printed and distributed through private funding from the members of the group and to posit a counter approach to the positivist research of Sociology in Israel. It was published until 1984 (Shalom Chetrit, 2004). Shalom Chetrit (Ibid) argues that it was the Black Panthers who directly influenced the paradigm shift in Israeli sociology and anthropology.

[92] This includes the films, *Have You Heard About the Panthers?* (2002), and *The Black Panthers Speak* (Shalom Chetrit and Hamo, 2003).

to a critical paradigm (Kizel 2014; Shalom Chetrit, 2004) On the parliamentary level, the Black Panthers movement brought a significant redistribution of the state's budget to counter poverty and socio-economic gaps (Lev-Aladgem 2007). Moreover they lay the ground for the emergence of numerous grassroots movements, who have continued to struggle over equal land and housing redistribution, especially in the geographical and social periphery of Israel. Examples include, The Tent Movement (1973), The Democratic Rainbow Coalition (1996), Ahoti (sister in Hebrew) – for Women in Israel (2000) and the more recent Not Nice [Masculine declension] - Not Nice [Feminine declension] (2011). Some organisations such as Ahoti and Not Nice – Not Nice were also involved in the 2011 Israeli protests for social justice (Levi, 2017; Misgav, 2013).

The Black Panthers' impact on the aesthetic regime of art and visual culture in general was no less important and can be seen both in the production of new types of practices and modes of visibility, as well as the expansion of artistic creation amongst groups who were excluded from the Israeli art discourse. According to theatre scholar Shulamith Lev-Aladgem (2007) the political dissensus created by the Black Panthers movement affected other creative fields such as theatre, and more specifically, alternative and radical theatre. The emergence of this type of theatre was itself a transversal event consisting of early career theatre directors, youth guides, social workers, and local youth, and emerged out of the then slums of Jerusalem, in neighbourhoods such as Katamonim and Kiryat Yovel, and the neighbourhoods of HaTikava in Tel Aviv and Jaffa. The need to affect the distribution of the sensible from additional cultural and artistic positions was

well expressed by of Bezalel Aloni, a composer and an artist, who met Sa'adia Marciano, one of the Black Panthers' leaders, who asked Aloni to help him organise a demonstration in Hatikva neighbourhood in Tel Aviv. Aloni was looking for a different action: "I didn't care about riots, I didn't believe in violence at all, I never thought of burning tires. I preferred another way. I wanted to make a play as a challenging weapon" (Lev-Aladgem, 2007: 64). The political subjectivsation of the youth, and specifically Ohel Yosef (Joseph's Tent in Hebrew) theatre group based in Katamonim neighbourhood in Jerusalem, has led to an unprecedented moment where artistic dissensus was correlated with political dissensus (Cohen; Lev-Aladgem 2006). Their themes of exclusion, racism and unattainable dreams due to the players' ethno-social location that were explored in their plays, were later translated into a political action when Ohel Yosef group invaded the public shelter in their neighbourhood and transformed it into a communal and youth centre which served as a bakery, laundromat, nursery, and embroidery and sewing factory. The development of a new communal and autonomous form of organisation was expanded into other neighbourhoods in Jerusalem and was parallel to Ohel Yosef's continuous theatrical creation. Finally, the network that was created has formed into a new protest movement called The Tent Movement. Their struggle over the lack of housing and proper infrastructure for the poor neighbourhoods was followed by a series of tactical and performative interventions, such as the temporary 'settlement' they established in 1980 called 'Ohel Moreh'. The name of this 'settlement' made a connection to the settlement Alon Moreh built in the Occupied Territories in the area of Samaria after the 1973 war. Similar to the Black Panthers, it was

another Mizrahi movement established in Jerusalem which made overall connections between the parallel discrimination of Palestinians and Mizrahi Jews, as well as the discriminatory geography when it came to allocations of resources for ideological settlements in the West Bank and to Mizrahi neighbourhoods in the cultural and geographical periphery of Israel.

Figure 38. Yigal Nizri, *Tiger*, 2001. Jerusalem: Israel Museum.

The aesthetics of the Black Panthers movement has also shaped the artistic language of a new generation of Mizrahi artists and performers, who were born into the radical years of the Black Panthers and the Tent Movement, and worked in Israel since the 1990s. These works suggest a relocation and expansion of the politics of the Black Panthers into the aesthetic regime of art. For example, the work, *Tiger* (2001), by Yigal Nizri is made out of the artist's childhood blanket of a tiger walking in a forest (figure 38). The blanket itself is cut in the shape of a tiger skin and the edge is lined with a pale blue ribbon. It was made in a local textile workshop in the 1970s, an industry that was mostly populated by Palestinian and Mizrahi workers. The work offers a blur of conflicting sensory experiences. The cutting of the blanket in the

shape of a tiger skin points at the sensory experience of the coloniser who invades a new land, shaping and taming it according to their own beliefs and norms. Yet the blanket itself, which was made in industrial factories and was often purchased by working class families, belongs to the sensory experience of the Mizrahi labourer. It also represents the two states of being a tiger; a tiger that is dead and one that is on a hunt, which is connected to questions of power, resistance and masculinity of the Mizrahi man. According to Shohat (2004) while the use of the image of a tiger expresses the political mobilisation of the Mizrahi man, it also perpetuates their image of noble savages within a Western-oriented society. Another example is the video work of Moran Ovadia, *Black Cat* [Feminine declension] (2006), a mocumentary on a Yemeni-Jewish woman played by Ovadia who joined the Black Panther Movement (figure 39). It follows her biography and her challenges both as a woman and a Jew from a Yemeni descendant within an all Moroccan-Jewish men movement through staged interviews with Ovadia's family members, the Mizrahi journalist Shaul Bibi, and Kochavi Shemesh and Charlie Biton from the Black Panthers movement. Here the dissensual elements occur through the blur of reality and fiction which points at the absence of a feminine Mizrahi heroine within the 1970s Mizrahi struggle, the marginal location of a Mizrahi woman in relation to the Ashkenazi political and cultural dominance and in relation to the patriarchal foundations within Mizrahi communities. Moreover, it deconstructs the category of the Mizrahi as it unravels the numerous layers that constitute the inner ethnic tensions that were generalised under the Israeli police order's mode of identification (Mizrahim) (Hever, Motzafi-Haller and Shenhav, 2002).

Figure 39. Moran Ovadia, *Black Cat*, 2006. DVD image. Photo by Moran Ovadia and Moshe Dor.

Both Nizri and Ovadia's work can be understood in terms of heterogeneity and multiplicity as the visual legacy of the Black Panthers was mixed with other sources of references and values, such as Mizrahi feminism and the impact of identity politics and post-colonial discourse. This can also point at the rhizomatic qualities of what can be broadly understood as Mizrahi art discourse and art making. While it can be argued that the emergence of the Mizrahi art is another way to understand the dialectic of local-global relations within Israeli art, I argue that this is not simply a process of importing and

localising global artistic trends that fit well with the local exploration of identity. Instead, it suggests a non-essentialist perception that also lacks a coherent, unified and linear historical development, such as the one suggested by the Zionist ideology discussed in the previous chapter. As such, Mizrahi art and discourse is not simply a struggle over cultural and political hegemony. As argued by Mizrahi scholars who have contemplated on the genealogy of the Mizrahi category, the Mizrahi struggle is an opportunity to form new collective assemblages (Alon and Keshet, 2013; Hever, Motzafi-Haller and Shenhav, 2002; Pedaya, 2015). For example, Hever, Motzafi-Haller and Shenhav (2002) emphasise the fluid and dynamic qualities that constitute the category of Mizrahim; Yonah and Shenhav (2005) suggest the Mizrahi category as an emancipatory and plural project that stands in contrast to the national and neo-liberal order in Israel; Alon (2013) suggests the spiral form as an appropriate form to describe the chronology of the Mizrahi presence within the Israeli art world; and Pedaya focuses on moments of ruptures where the excluded and subconsciousness voice of Mizrahi subjects produces a break within the everyday distribution of the sensible. These are all characteristics that constitute rhizomatic systems and were referred to in the exhibition *Routes of Wandering* examined in the previous section. However, in the case of *Routes of Wandering* I argued that the rhizome was used as a different theoretical reading from which to bring together and analyse Israeli artworks that have already been established within Israeli art historiography. It did not put into question the actual premises, sites and figures that have constituted the centralised and dialectic model of it.

The discussion on Mizrahi art discourse and the rhizome brings us back to this thesis argument regarding the potential of marginal sites, the neighbourhood of Musrara – in producing new types of artistic activities that undermine the centre's – i.e. Israeli art historiography and mainstream art institutions – modes of representations and categorisation. Since the discussion on Mizrahi art and post-colonial critique on Israeli art goes beyond the scope of this thesis, I refer to two examples that relate to the treatment of the representational regime of Israeli art to the cultural and political legacy of the Black Panthers movement. The first example refers to the prevention of counter-narratives and sensory experiences from entering the representational regime of Israeli art. In 2010 an exhibition called *Black Panther* [Feminine declension] *White Cube* was supposed to launch at the Ramat-Gan Museum of Israeli Art. According to a reflective text written by the curator, Shlomit Lir (2017), the exhibition aimed to critically approach Israeli society's construction of collective identities, with a focus on the way the Western-oriented hegemonic culture in Israel constituted itself in relation to what it defines as the 'other'. The title of the exhibition suggested this conflictual relationship between the autonomous and modernist principles that direct the representational regime of Israeli art, and the Black Panthers struggle to break through the distribution of the sensible, of both the aesthetic and the political regime. The inability to "conduct a social, cultural and political discourse that includes those who are considered different and other within Israeli public" has proven itself, according to Lir (2017: 312), as the museum's management has cancelled the exhibition a short time prior to

its opening. The management's response was that it has informed them that the exhibition is too political for the museum.

The second example demonstrates the incorporation of the Black Panthers movement's history but in a way that does not undermine the formalistic, apolitical, and autonomous space of the 'white cube'. In 2017 The Israel Museum launched the exhibition *Born in Israel*. This exhibition, curated by Noam Gal, showed the photographs of the Ya'acov Shofar, amongst them, were images of the Black Panthers' members documented in their domestic spaces. While the exhibition was described as innovative in the way it depicted an unfamiliar visual representation of the Black Panthers, the exhibition space was quite small and the images were shown without mentioning the names of the figures (Barzilay, 2017; Elkayam, 2017). In relation to the representational regime of Israeli art, the image of the Black Panthers members can be compared to the image of the Arab native in the early Modern painting of Jewish artists during the 1920s and the 1930s that I mentioned in the previous chapter. Although portrayed as an inseparable part of the local landscape, the Arab native was deprived of particular qualities, and instead was treated as a working material from which to articulate an aesthetic language of locality and authenticity. In the case of the Black Panthers members, by avoiding mentioning their names, the exhibition reaffirmed the transparency of Mizrahim within the police order and their state of poverty and simplicity as the natural way of things. The separation between what visual scholar Noa Hazan (2013: 71) refers as "the visual and the interpretative", and what the representational regime of Israeli art distinguish between artistic matters and non-artistic matters, has gained a

further confirmation in the opening event of the exhibition where none of the Black Panthers members were invited. The opening remarks were held in English and most of the discussions focused on the photographer's courage to get closer to the Black Panthers and successfully depicting them as human beings, "pure souls" (Elkayam, 2017: online). One of the responses to this exhibition was a free art tour conducted by a former member of the Black Panthers, Reuven Abergel, where he provided the names and stories behind the images (Ibid).

3.3 Local Heterogeneities: Muslala's *The Black Panthers' Road*

After examining the main references that I argue to be central to the constitution of a new aesthetic assemblage in Musrara neighbourhood, I analyse the temporal and spatial configurations of the *Black Panthers' Road*. This section focuses on two elements of the Muslala project: the first is the creation of a walking path from which to experience the distributed works of art connected to *The Black Panthers' Road*. This is a pattern that Muslala has used since it started working in the neighbourhood in 2009. I look at the practice of walking and mapping, as well as the relation between the collective work of creating this path, to individual works that were created on it.[93] I would argue that choosing a walking path in the Musrara neighbourhood is a practice that enables understanding *The Black Panthers Road* as a rhizome. The second element is the mixed artistic techniques and styles of the artworks displayed in Muslala's project. *The Black Panthers' Road* consists of murals, installations and photographs that suggest different

[93] In the introduction, I explained that the word Muslala consists of the name of the neighbourhood (Musrara) and the Hebrew word Maslul which means a path, road or a track.

interpretations for the Black Panther and Mizrahi history in the Musrara neighbourhood. Altogether, I argue in this section that *The Black Panthers' Road* posits a dissensus to the representational regime of Israeli art, as well as to the Israeli police order. This project is political not because it portrays a political movement. As the previous example shows, simply exhibiting historical documentation of marginalised groups and their political struggle does not equal a critical statement that undermines the way they are seen within a given order. The political aspect resides within the re-framing of the conditions of visibility and modes of representation that distribute the sensible. This project first changes the way of seeing and perceiving the Black Panthers within Israeli politics as either a violent group or a sectoral group that is struggling for more welfare rights. Second, it uses the Black Panthers as a major reference point to reconfigure art's spaces of visibility. This relates both to the involvement of under-represented artists but also to the articulation of new meanings about locality, authenticity and styles that have high value within the representational regime of Israeli art.

3.3.1 New Paths for Art

> These nameless alleys will get the names of those who change the face of this neighbourhood and even the Israeli society … If we wouldn't have done it, they would have been dead before someone will name a bench or a stone after them.[94]

When the Muslala collective started working in the Musrara neighbourhood, there were already several art institutions active around the area, for example, the Jerusalem Print Workshop, Museum on the Seam, Musrara School of Art, the Centre for Middle Eastern Classical Music, Ma'aleh School of Television, Films & Art, and the Musrara Social Gallery. Despite the

[94] Matan Israeli on the legacy of the Black Panthers movement. In: Hasson, 2011: online.

different functions of each institution, what is common to most of them is the emphasis on local artists, traditions and histories, and the production of art (fine art, music, film) with various levels of connection to the historical layers of the area of Musrara. Museum on the Seam was opened a short time prior to the beginning of the second intifada in 2000, in a former Palestinian house that used to be an Israeli army outpost between 1948-1967 and focuses on socio-political art exhibitions; Ma'aleh School integrates Jewish and Talmudic studies with its curriculum and has expanded the participation of religious Israeli-Jewish film makers; the Centre for Middle Eastern Classical Music connects higher education with Arab and Andalusian music, musical genres that were categorised as folklore or popular music within an Israeli context; and the Musrara School of Art that created an archive and gallery collecting and depicting the oral and documented history of the neighbourhood, and has encouraged its students to engage with it.

The Muslala collective has contributed to the attempts to create new connections between art, politics and the local community. One of its ways of doing this was creating art paths and routes around the neighbourhood of Musrara. This is something that characterised the works of Muslala artists even before the formal establishment of the art collective. One of the works that are associated with the pre-history of Muslala is *Chiara's Stairs* (2006-2014) by Muslala member Matan Israeli (Muslala, 2018). The work consisted of wooden stairs built without permission on the acoustic wall that stands between Musrara parking lot and Road One as an easy shortcut between Musrara and the Old City. The stairs were built by Israeli – then an art student at Bezalel – to make it easier to walk to his (now ex)-lover Chiara, an

Italian exchange student who lived in the Old City. These stairs were found useful especially for Palestinians who went shopping around the Old City. They were dismantled for security reasons by the Jerusalem municipality and reinstalled by Matan Israeli several times. In 2008, a wealthy Palestinian merchant from the Old City donated money to improve the stairs' structure. The stairs were then used to commemorate his son who died in a motorcycle accident, long after the love story between Israeli and Chiara was over. The stairs were finally dismantled in 2014 with the beginning of the 'Knife Intifada'.

The use of nomadic means and tactical[95] interventions has since then become a main practice in the work of the Muslala collective. This was seen for example, in the two painting boards located in the Musrara neighbourhood where artists were invited to create works that responded to the neighbourhood history and the current paintings on the boards (Muslala, 2018). It was also seen through projects, such as *Black Panthers' Road*, and the weekly art tours where Muslala paved temporary paths where discussions on art, politics and the history of Musrara and Jerusalem took place. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of the characteristics of the rhizome is the element of cartography which suggests an open-ended and experimental approach to space (be it physical or symbolic space) without assuming a fixed goal or destination, as well as a position of power or ownership. This type of approach has both affective and discursive elements as they bring to the surface hidden narratives and histories that challenge the distribution of the sensible, and generates new experience and encounters.

[95] I rely here on Michel de Certeau's (1988: xx, 37-38) definition of tactics that means a temporary intervention or disturbance of power structures, often by altering or misusing the means of production used to maintain power.

These elements were discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the Muslala project *Between Green and Red – The Meeting Point* (2012, 2013), but it is also possible to detect them in the creative process around the painting boards. There were collaborative and dialogical aspects that followed the individual expressive processes of painting on these boards. First, the artist never created on a blank page, but responded to the previous painting by erasing, cutting, and combining the elements. Second, the presence of the artists within the public space of Musrara transformed this space into a dissensual space, that allowed for different relations to occur between the painting, the artists, and the passers-by. The different backgrounds of the artists also contributed to affective responses of the passers-by to the artworks and to the possibility to expand this encounter onto new transversal constellations. For example, some of the religious artists who painted murals in Musrara attracted the attention of the Ultra-Orthodox residents who stopped and asked questions about the paintings and even offered help. According to Shimon Pinto (2018: 206-208), a Mizrahi Orthodox artists who made two paintings for the painting boards, the contact he made with the Ultra-Orthodox residents during his work with Muslala collective enabled him to expand Muslala's public art projects onto the Ultra-Orthodox neighbourhoods adjacent to Musrara and involve artists from this community. At other times, as I have discussed in the previous chapter, the paintings were modified or vandalised by the residents, something that in a way signified the direct involvement of residents in the shaping of their communal space.

Figure 40. Muslala, The Black Panthers Road, 2011. Rafi Ohayon (a Black Panther member). Muslala Facebook Page (28 January 2015).

Figure 41. Muslala, *The Black Panthers Road*, 2011. Carlie Biton (a Black Panther member). Muslala Facebook Page (28 January 2015).

The examples mentioned above demonstrate the correlation between content, form, and affect, and the impact of space – i.e. art space, public space, residential space – on the type of artistic activity it enables. In *The Black Panthers' Road* the focus around the Black Panthers' movement had two main goals. It first provided a justification for the collective to work in the neighbourhood where the Black Panthers' members originally came from (figures 40-41). In the beginning of this chapter I mentioned that one of the

main activities in this project was the renaming of some of the streets and alleys. This act, alongside the instalment of art works, was conducted without the permission of the Jerusalem Municipality, which historically was one of the police order's bodies who denied the sensory reality produced by the Black Panthers movement. To allow for such intervention to be effective, Muslala needed the support and collaboration of the Musrara residents. The second reason for using the Black Panthers movement as the main reference for this project was to reconfigure their cultural and political legacy within a new aesthetic constellation. As a reminder, *The Black Panthers Road* was one of the first large scale projects of the Muslala collective within the Musrara neighbourhood, a year prior to the first *Between Green and Red – The Meeting Point.* As such this project can be seen as an event that attempted to generate a new transversal movement within the neighbourhood that continued the radical politics of the Black Panthers movement within the current socio-political context in Israel. Before elaborating on the notion of the event, it is important to note that the launch of *The Black Panthers' Road* took place a week before the emergence of the J14 movement. Identifying a connection between both movements can only be done retrospectively. However, it does suggest a general collective atmosphere of dissatisfaction toward the police order which led simultaneously to several collective actions that intended to challenge the distribution of the sensible. Based on Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of this notion, Jill Bennett (2012) describes the event as an alternative practice for history as well as genealogy-making which reconfigures elements of time, space, and action within a rhizomatic constellation. The

event has an eruptive quality in our modes of perceptions and knowledge which does not fit within our everyday life experience. Similar to the understanding of politics presented in this thesis, the affective potential of the event lies not only in the act of reinterpreting the past or exposing hidden meanings but in "put[ting] things together in new ways in order to generate counter-memories, or conditions under which different actualisation might take place" (Ibid: 43).

Figure 42. Muslala, *The Black Panthers Road*, 2011. Black Panthers Way. Muslala Facebook Page (28 January 2015).

The names chosen for this project indicates the type of counter-memories produced in *The Black Panthers' Road*. According to the Muslala collective (2018: 106), the intention behind the decision to rename the entire path that constituted the project, *The Black Panthers Road*, and to avoid renaming other streets and alleys after significant leaders of the movement, was to emphasise the power of mass movements and collective endeavours in mobilising change (figure 42). However, as opposed to the act of omitting the names of the Black Panthers members in the art exhibition *Born in Israel* discussed in the previous section, this case highlighted the element of

collectivity as something that was unique to the Mizrahi struggle during the 1970s and which led to the establishment of other community and collective-based organisations. Moreover, the entire project was made with the collaboration of members of the Black Panthers. *The Black Panthers Road* then consisted of several streets and allies that started from the Muslala community administration and ended at the Muslala community garden (figure 43). This was another way in which this project made new connections between different collective bodies as well as fields, such as the communal and the artistic. In addition to the road's name another nameless ally has received the name "They are not nice ally" (figure 44). This sentence is a paraphrase of Prime Minister Golda Meir's comment on the Black Panthers after their meeting. The future plan of Muslala, which did not come to fruition, was to expand *The Black Panthers' Road* and add a segment that goes from the Musrara community administration up to the Jerusalem municipality. This addition is a critical response to another remark made by former mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kollek during the first Black Panthers demonstration on March 3, 1971: "get down from the lawn, you brats" (Muslala, 2018: 104). It is interesting to compare this counter-memory to this critical intervention of Abergel within the *Born in Israel* exhibition. In this exhibition there was a dissensual clash with the dominant modes of representation within one of the most significant institutions of the representative regime of Israeli art. In *The Black Panthers' Road* however, instead of intervening with the sensorial presentation of the police order, the police order itself is reframed within a new aesthetic constellation which posits it in a satirical way.

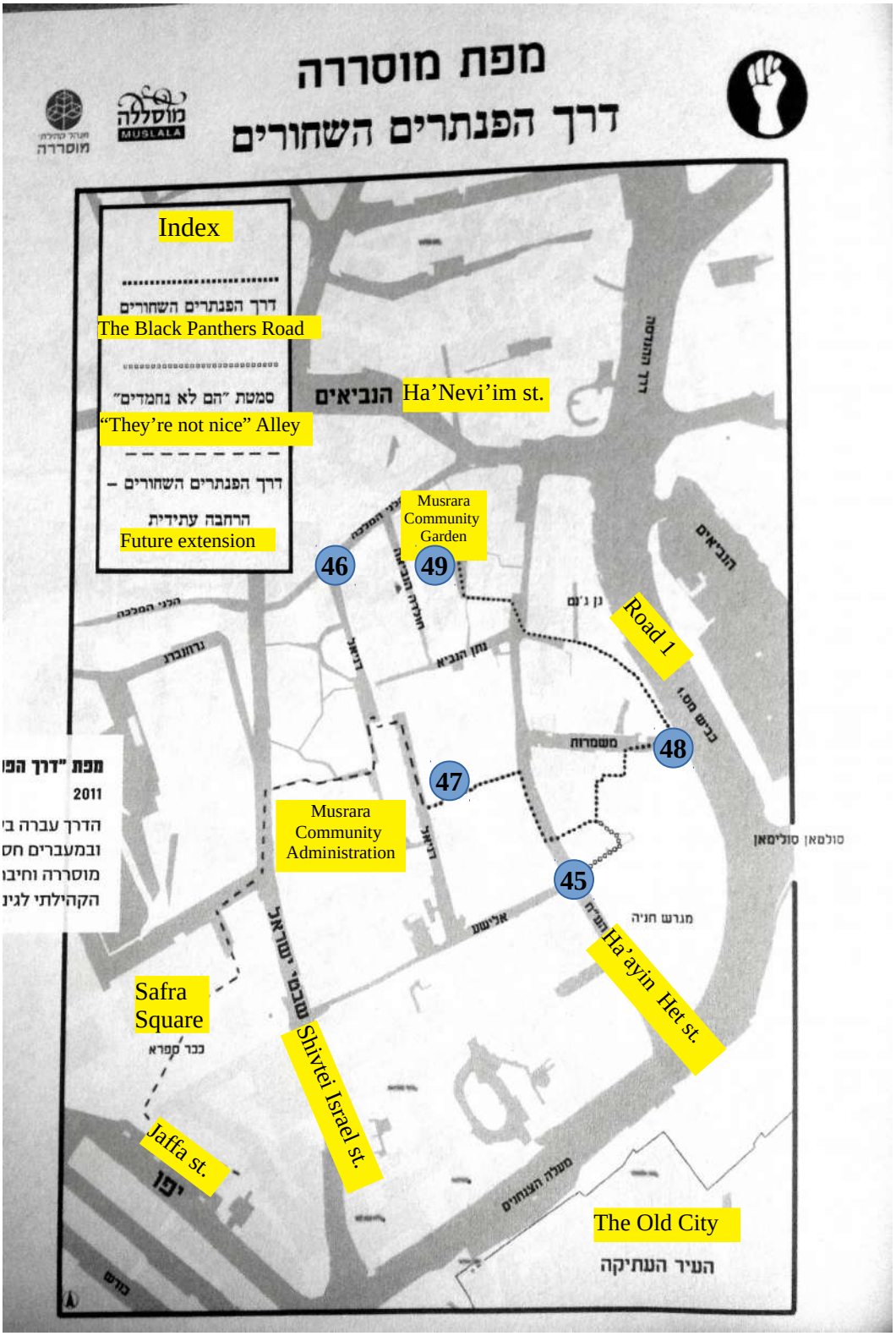

Figure 43. Muslala. *The Black Panthers Road*, 2011. Road Map. Muslala, 2018, p.113. Translation made by the author. In circle: the numbers of the artworks' figures discussed in this chapter.

Figure 44. Muslala, *The Black Panthers Road*, 2011. “They’re not Nice” Alley. Muslala Facebook Page (28 January 2015).

3.3.2 Political Collage

I discussed the ways in which *The Black Panthers’ Road* incorporated rhizomatic elements, such as cartography and rupture. I showed how these elements managed to produce a different sensory presentation of the Black Panthers movement which was either denied or co-opted by the police order. In the following paragraphs I focus on other rhizomatic elements that can also be seen within the individual artworks that constitute the road. I argue that the type of heterogeneity produced in these works stood in contrast to the dialectical juxtapositions of local and universal materials and ideas that were suggested by Bretiberg-Semel (1986: online) in the exhibition *The Want of the Matter*. As such, the artworks in *The Black Panthers Road* also contributed to the articulation of new local heterogeneities that undermined the association of local artistic value with the secular, Tel Avivan and Ashkenazi artist. According to Rancière (2010: 126) heterogeneity is a quality that characterises aesthetic artworks. For example the technique of collage introduced new ways of mixing and juxtaposing mediums, thus creating a

dissensus expressed through feelings of strangeness and contradiction as a result of combining multiple forms of sensory presentations that were not necessarily parts of the aesthetic regime of art, such as newspaper and found materials (Ibid). The project *The Black Panthers' Road* can be understood as heterogeneous as it includes several sensory forms which reconfigure the space of Musrara. Apart from the act of renaming some of the streets, these streets became a space for viewing art. They depicted paintings and other installations that were related directly and indirectly to the Black Panthers.

The artworks installed in the road were diverse in technique and themes and were made by members of the Muslala collective and artists who were invited to do works in the neighbourhood. Chen Shapira's work, *Wall and Tower – the Black Panthers Version* (figure 45), was painted on the Muslala painting board on Hayin-Het street. It was a mixed-media painting consisting of copies of the Black Panther pamphlets, posters and newspapers, each framed by a black painted framework. On the background there was a black painted silhouette of a cat or a panther coming from one of the documents, and another black silhouette of a wall and a guard tower that looked like a prison. The juxtaposition of the documents themselves look like another wall in the form of the historical wall around Jerusalem Old City, posited against the prison in the back. Ruth Barkay's installation *Flowers to the Slums* (figure 46), used colourful ceramic flowers and other ornamental decorations, such as rosettes and ceramic tiles, which were placed on the exterior walls of a housing project in the neighbourhood. Rina Shamir's, *Faith's Benches*, were situated along *The Black Panthers' Road*. Shamir installed on already

existing benches a small plate saying “this bench faces East. From this direction salvation will rise. Sit, behold, be prepared for it...”; Porat Salomon’s, *Tish* (figure 47), was painted on the second painting board on Heleni Hamalca street. Tish refers to a Hasidic gathering of celebration open to non-Hasids which includes food, songs and spiritual speeches given by their Rabbi. The figures are depicted as black silhouettes where the Rabbi and some of his followers are highlighted in the front. Einat Amir’s (figure 48), *The Swamp in the Edge of Mishmarot St*, is a painting of a tropical foreign landscape on a closed green gate. It is a visual translation of Roey Drey’s childhood memories from Musrara. According to Drey (Muslala, 2018: 107), due to the lack of parks and playgrounds in the neighbourhood, the kids used to play near the Musrara swamp which was created by the accumulation of sewer water from the western neighbourhoods of Jerusalem. Amir was mostly fascinated by Drey’s nostalgic description of the swamp as a space of childhood adventure and curiosity, and decided to draw the painting based on this memory than the actual depiction of the swamp. Another project that was part of, *The Black Panthers’ Road*, was Edward Amiga’s, *Edward’s Tree* (2010) (figure 49), which was located in the Muslala community garden. *Edward’s Tree* is a stump of Ailanthus an invasive species that used to be common as an ornamental plant in Israel. On top of the stump there was a human figure spreading its hands in an ascending position. Along the stump there was a thin strip of copper that looked like an orange light at the edge of the garden.

Taking both Rancière’s and Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of heterogeneity, this congregation of artworks along *The Black Panthers’ Road*

introduced new sensory realities and collective assemblages within the aesthetic regime of Israeli art. The art made in *The Black Panthers' Road* is one attempt – out of many others – to re-territorialise the definition of locality. As some of the works demonstrate, the understanding of place and identity is anchored within multiple universes of references and values that range from more hegemonic configurations, such as *The Want of the Matter* thesis, as well as a marginal artistic approach to colour, landscape and identity, and other narratives embedded in Musrara such as the Mizrahi narrative, and the Hassidic narrative. I demonstrate this argument by looking at some of the formal characteristics that are dominant in the works, such as the use of dark colours in the paintings, the use of juxtaposition of local and strange objects in the installations, and the treatment of Eastern and exotic landscapes. As mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, one of the main characteristics of Israeli painting, especially between the 1920s and the 1960s, is the use of bright colours which depicted the local intense light of a Mediterranean landscape. During that time, the use of dark colours was an artistic style of Jewish immigrant artists who failed to be assimilated into the artistic and cultural milieu of Tel Aviv. In the 1930s, it was mostly Jews from Germany and Austria who lived in Jerusalem and used dark colour and expressionistic style to express their alienation both from their countries of origin, as well as with the new land. Later on, in the first years following the establishment of Israel, the use of dark colour depicted the hardship of the working class – especially Arab-Jewish immigrants in the city of Haifa. According to Haviva Pedaya (2014) Black became a signifier of the stranger, the other, and the alienated, and later on, since the 1990s, has been adopted

by second generation Mizrahi artists to artistically express the Mizrahi experience.

Figure 45. Chen Shapira, *Wall and Tower – the Black Panthers Version*, 2011. Muslala website.

In Shapira's painting, *Wall and Tower – the Black Panthers' Version*, the black silhouettes of the panther, the wall and the guard tower reconfigure the Zionist narrative of "wall and tower" – a tactic of construction, resistance but also of fortification from the local landscape, as described in the previous chapter – within the sensory experience of the Black Panthers. Here the guard tower is depicted in the background as a threatening structure symbolising the police order where the panther overlooks it from its own fortification – another sensory reality that clashes with the Zionist Wall and Tower. This fortification is made of copies of the Black Panthers' newspaper and their juxtaposition resonates with Jerusalem's building technique – one Jerusalem stone lying on top of the other. The old historical wall around Jerusalem becomes the site of a new radical message. Their wall however, is not made of concrete or stone but is rather textual, containing their critical analysis of Israeli society and their aim of changing its structure. The technique of adding images and texts from newspapers is not foreign to

Israeli painting, especially paintings depicted in the exhibition, *The Want of the Matter*. However in, *Wall and Tower – the Black Panthers' Version*, the use of newspapers is not only a formal enquiry of experimenting with different mediums, but also an act that is embedded within a different space. It requires the passer-by to stop in front of the painting and pay attention to it, to read and understand its place and relevance.

Figure 46. Porat Salomon, *Tish*, 2011. Muslala website.

In Salomon's painting, *Tish*, the use of black is relocated to another experience of otherness – the Ultra Orthodox or the Hassidic Jew. Salomon (Muslala 2018: 62) understands the Black Panthers' legacy as leaving a stain on society: "[the Black Panther] does not hide from its environment, but chooses to be absent within it as a shadow, as a hole. In its presence it denies it. Makes a hole in it". In contrast to the one small panther shadow in Shapira's painting, the shadow depicted in Salomon's painting is of a Hassidic mass united under the spiritual leadership of the Rabbi. It is a shadow – of spirituality, of diaspora, of fundamentalism, depending on interpretation (this shadow in a way represents Salomon in the aesthetic regime of Israeli art – he is not just a religious artist, but lives in the illegal

settlement of Bat Eyin in the West Bank). Salomon chose to paint over the previous painting on the board without erasing it. The previous painting, *My fire will always keep on Burning* (2010), by Elad Rosen depicted a big fire on one side – a fire which resonates with the Breslev Hassidic movement – and on top heavy clouds that were also painted on a former painting. This painting, *Blossom* (2010), by Illa Louis is a camouflage of the board by painting on it the continuation of the wall behind it and leaves of three ailantus trees above it. By maintaining the historical traces of the painting board, Salomon drew a continuation between the black stain of the Black Panthers – the former residents of the neighbourhood – and the black stain of the growing Hassidic communities in the neighbourhood, which like the ailantus tree spreads beyond the unofficial border between secular Jerusalem and Ultra Orthodox Jerusalem.

Figure 47. Ruth Barkay, *Flowers to the Slums*, 2011. Muslala website.

The acknowledgement of historical layers, of continuation and ruptures, can be seen in other works installed on *The Black Panthers' Road.* Barkay's *Flowers to the Slums* can also be understood in terms of the dialectic tension between the local (Eastern decoration) and the universal (modern socialist housing projects). However, from the perspective of the contemporary gaze

on these housing projects, they are contrasted to the Modern socialist promise from Israel's early decades. Its current residents no longer see these buildings as polished and of advanced architectural design, as they were depicted in national posters encouraging the mass immigration of Jews, but rather as neglected, overcrowded and deprived. The housing projects from this perspective do not represent the socialist Zionist dream, but the discriminatory policy when it comes to inhabiting and absorbing Arab-Jews within the Israeli-Jewish police order. The housing block contrasts Barkay's ceramic decoration which resonates with the architecturally Arabic style of Musrara and the diasporic memory of the Arab-Jews. Many of the original Arabic houses are now inhabited by residents of the first and second wave of gentrification. Both the housing projects and the ceramic decorations represent the two forms of Arabness within the Israeli context – of the native Arab who was dispossessed, and whose culture and architecture were appropriated into the Zionist narrative; and the Jewish-Arab, who was relocated into a modern habitant as part of erasing its Arabness.

Figure 48. Einat Amir, *The Swamp in the Edge of Mishmarot St.,* 2011. Muslala website.

The final two stops of *The Black Panthers' Road* confront again the notion of locality. In Amir's *The Swamp in the Edge of Mishmarot St*, the local view is ignored in favour of an imagined and exotic landscape. This is not the same type of exoticisation of the promised land of Israel by Jewish artists in the 1920s and the 1930s, but rather a form of childish imagination and exoticisation as a means to survive. The children of Musrara imagined a sensory reality which was distant from the Arab history of the neighbourhood as well as the Israeli Zionist landscape. Finally, *Edward's Tree*, which is located in the community garden, celebrates this foreignness and strangeness through the human figure that grows and develops from the dislocated base. The highlighted strip of copper marks this tree in the garden as a reminder of each layer of the neighbourhood. The community garden is the latest constellation in the neighbourhood to become a space that contains all of these sensory presentations of Musrara. It is the acknowledgement of this hybridity, multiplicity and heterogeneity that makes the neighbourhood Musrara a fascinating case study. Interestingly, the tree was vandalised a few weeks after it was installed. The motives behind it are not known, but given the tense history between the Muslala collective and the Musrara community administration, and other residents who did not see their presence positively, it is possible to assume that it was to do with depicting the history of Musrara as one that holds many temporary and relational histories that are equal in their validity.

Figure 49. Edward Amiga's, *Edward's Tree*, 2010. Muslala website.

The story about the end of the collaboration between Muslala and Musrara community administration has already been told. However, it seems that one of the things that both sides agreed on was the legacy and importance of the Black Panthers in the history of the neighbourhood and the history of the Mizrahi struggle and Israeli civil disobedience. Today, there is almost no trace left of Muslala activity in the neighbourhood. However, in 2014 two anonymous residents of Musrara painted on one of the painting boards a black outline of a panther on a yellow background – the colour symbolising one of the local Jerusalem football groups. Underneath the drawing of the panther is written in big letters in Hebrew "The Black Panthers" (figure 50). It is still there today.

Figure 50. Unknown, *The Black Panthers*, 2014. Muslala. Muslala, 2018, p.64.

3.4 Summary

This chapter examined the ways socially engaged and collaborative art practices undermine the conceived historiography and structure of Israeli art. Continuing the discussion from the previous chapter on the connections Muslala established with Musrara residents, this chapter focused on the potential of such connections to intervene within the set of values and references that have constituted the representational regime of Israeli art. For this purpose, this chapter elaborated on the spatio-temporal elements of transversality that were described as a-centric and/or rhizomatic constellations. The qualities of these constellations, such as heterogeneity, multiplicity, connectivity, rupture, and cartography, allowed to draw new connections between various locations, movements, practices and traditions that have been ignored or misrepresented within Israeli art historiography and institutions.

Through the collaborative project*, The Black Panthers' Road*, between Muslala collective, former members of the Black Panthers movement and current residents of Musrara neighbourhood, this chapter emphasised the relations between transversality and the redistribution of the sensible in two main ways. The first was by producing aesthetic objects and experiences that reconfigured the modes of visibility – meaning, where and under what conditions art is made and consumed, and who creates and consumes it. This was shown by Musrara neighbourhood's transformation into a site of art production and circulation which absorbed its sets of references and values from the legacy of the Black Panthers movement on Israeli politics and culture. The aesthetic potential of *The Black Panthers' Road* in reframing the conditions of visibility and modes of representation resided in content and in form. In content – through the ways the Black Panthers' were represented – as pioneers of the civil struggle in Israel, a narrative that was often not told in the media, the education system and in the art institutions. In form – through the usage of walking and cartography as practices from which to situate the events and artworks presented in *The Black Panthers' Road*. These practices also incorporated elements of dialogue and story-telling within the artistic production, for example by collectively reminiscing the past during the inauguration of the project, or during the conversation and collaboration artists had with the residents while painting on the painting boards in the neighbourhood. Not only they allowed for grassroots and local knowledge to receive visibility, but the also reframe the police order and the representational regime of Israeli art within Musrara's own aesthetic constellation.

The second way in which aesthetics and transversality were combined in this chapter was by suggesting transversality as an alternative aesthetic model to the dialectic model of the representational regime of Israeli art. *The Black Panthers' Road* was used as a case study from which to articulate other values, references and qualities that stood in opposition to the secular and Western-oriented articulation of locality and authenticity within Israeli art historiography. This chapter posited *The Black Panthers Road* in contrast to *The Want of the Matter* exhibition and thesis which laid the ground for the geopolitical and cultural binary between Jerusalem/Tel Aviv from which other binaries were drawn, such as local/universal, religious/secular, and conservative/liberal. *The Black Panthers Road* was also posited in relation to other exhibitions and texts which aimed to critically reflect upon the dialectic model of Israeli art, however without challenging the actual model. Choosing *The Black Panthers' Road* as an articulation of an aesthetic transversality did not offer a linear reading of artistic movements and development in which this project is the latest manifestation of a fixed narrative. Rather, this project demonstrated the way the various sensorial layers which are connected to the Musrara neighbourhood are juxtaposed alongside in an equal and disruptive way. Some of these layers that have been visible in Musrara, such as the presence of Muslala and the radical legacy of the Black Panthers' movement will continue to move and re-territorialise themselves in other constellations, some which will be discussed in the next chapter.

4. The Art of Sustaining Change

The previous chapters analysed issues of identity, community and narrative formations in Israeli socially-engaged and collaborative art practices using a transversal approach. This approach aims to challenge mainstream Israeli art discourse by decentralising and re-territorialising existing art historical narratives within a context of dissensus and change. The art collectives in discussion work outside the art institutions, collaborate with groups who lack representation within Israeli art discourse and society, and adopt open-ended, temporary and interventionist art practices. I have shown how these working methods contribute to the creation of alternative collective assemblages, and enable the configuration of space within alternative universes of references and values. Their projects highlight the various possibilities through which the national-neo-liberal police order in Israel – an order that determines the levels of participation and belonging within Israeli society – can be challenged.

While the previous chapters focused on short-term projects as a way of temporarily intervening in specific locations and challenging prevailing social, political and economic assumptions, this chapter focuses on processes of institutionalisation that have affected the work of the collectives addressed in the studies. By institutionalisation I refer to processes of regulating these art practices within designated locations to offer continuous activities. This process becomes possible due to support – financial and/or moral – from city municipalities, development and management companies, and NGOs. The transformation raises questions regarding the tension between arts' social responsibility versus arts' subversive potential, as well as issues raised from

being co-opted by and collaborating with the police order representatives. These questions are discussed through an analysis of the Muslala and Empty House latest projects, *The Terrace – a Roof for a New Urbanity* (2016-ongoing) and *The Factory* (2016-ongoing) respectively; the organisational and management changes that have occurred in Arteam's, *The Garden Library – Centre for Education Culture and Arts* (2009-ongoing); and through a new case study of the art collective Onya and their first two projects, *Next Station* (2014), and *The Ramp* (2014-ongoing). This chapter analyses the relations between trasversality and institutionalisation by looking at the changes occurring within the art practices, and some of the challenges they now face. I argue that these processes of institutionalisation do not necessarily indicate the neutralisation of the critical and political aspects of the art collectives. Rather, it suggests the production of alternative economic and communal models that are based on social relations and environmental awareness, in which the art collectives operate.

This chapter also considers the specific political, material and symbolic conditions from which new aesthetic communities can emerge, and outlines the possibilities and limitations. This includes, on the one hand, processes of urban renewal in which creative models of development and regeneration are implemented by municipalities, and the increased "sense of urgency" within the art world in dealing with issues of spatial and climate justice on the other (Demos, 2016: 7). In addition to examining processes of institutionalisation, this chapter continues the discussion of issues explored in previous chapters, such as the production of alternative intersubjective

experiences and encounters based on shared labour and sentiments, and the expansion of artistic skills.

4.1 On the Production of Transversal Institutes

Institutionalisation is a concept familiar both in political sciences and art research, and broadly refers to a transformative process of weakening or co-opting a subversive artwork, style, or movement (Beech, 2006; Foster, 1985; Holdo, 2019; Solomon-Godeau, 1990). While this observation does not necessarily evaluate the failure or success of the subversive act, it acknowledges the temporariness of this act, and therefore its inevitable 'destiny' to disappear and/or become part of the 'system' (Shenhav, 2009). This observation is similar to Rancière's (2010) understanding of dissensus – of the political and the aesthetic regime – as a temporary act that intervenes in the police order sensory configuration, and stands between the current order of things and the possible constitution of a new sensorial commons. There are several ways in which processes of institutionalisation can be identified. In politics, protest movements, such as the Black Panthers and the J14 Movement discussed in this thesis, is absorbed within the consensual boundaries of the police order, in the form of recruiting the protest leaders into political parties, the emergence of new political parties and civic organisations, and the implementation of the protestors' demands through government reports and new policies (Shalom Chetrit, 2004).[96] Within art

[96] For example, J14 Movement activists, Stav Shaffir and Itzik Shmuli joined the Israeli Labour party and served as members of Knesset; two centrist parties, the first is Yesh Atid ('there is a future' in Hebrew, founded in 2012) and Kulanu ('all of us' in Hebrew, founded in 2014) which focused on economic and cost-of-living issues. Their emergence is associated with the public pressure created during the J14 Movement; Following the end of the J14 Movement, then PM Benjamin Netanyahu appointed a commission called 'Trajtenberg Committee' to examine the possible solutions to Israeli economic challenges, especially around issues of housing, education and taxation.

discourse, institutionalisation can take the form of absorbing critical or activist art practices that challenge the legitimacy or validity of the institutions, the values and the criteria in which art is evaluated, preserved and circulated, within a non-threatening context as part of the 'institutional critique' of the art industry or the art object (Raunig, 2007; Sholette, 1999: 46). Critical and activist forms of art have been canonised within Western art historical discourse, and have also become tools to associate desirable qualities with art institutions ("[offering] an uncompromising democracy zone for engaging in civic dialogue" Sholette, 2017: 42) and art consumers (as being "tolerant, enlightened, willing to accept risk and challenge" Kester, 2011: 63-64).

For almost three decades, socially engaged art has been widely co-opted within the mainstream art world in the form of publications, commissions and academic programmes (Felshin, 1995; Lacy, 1995; Thompson & Sholette, 2004; Weibel, 2015). While often associated with processes of democratisation of mainstream art spaces, critics of the institutionalisation of socially engaged art practices have often pointed out the overall political and economic powers that have shaped this 'social turn'. Bishop (2012) argues that the support given to socially engaged art practises by different cultural bodies – for example, museums and galleries, and municipal and cultural departments – does not necessarily mean an ideological affiliation with socialism or endorsement of radical and progressive political movements. In fact, this type of support can be traced back to cultural and urban policy, shaped under governments that have adopted new public management strategies as a means to reduce public spending (Bonham-Carter, 2017; Vickery, 2007). One of the consequences of this type of policy is shifting of

responsibilities, such as welfare and education, from the public sector (governments and municipalities) to the private (companies and corporations) and to the civic sectors (non-governmental and non-profit organisations). Within the context of reduced public funding, the art and cultural sectors went through a process of 'instrumentalisation' where the economic and social values of the arts have been emphasised as a means to justify its financial support (Bonham-Carter, 2017). As this research focuses on socially engaged art practices that are taking places outside mainstream art institutions, this chapter discusses these processes of instrumentalisation in relation to urban development, where qualities associated with art production and art workers, such as creativity, originality, flexibility and open-mindedness, are implemented within new strategies, such as culture-led regeneration and creative place-making (Vickery, 2007; Iyengar, 2019: 187). These policies broadly refer to a partnership between "public, private, non-profit and community sectors [which] strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighbourhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities" (Gadwa and Markusen, 2010: 3).[97] As the following sections show, similar strategies were adopted in major cities in Israel within the last two decades. I ask what types of social and economic objectives they aim to achieve, how the actual implementation of these policies affects the urban fabrics of places, such as Jerusalem and south Tel Aviv, with deep

[97] This description, for example, came from a report by the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts which since the 2010 have advocated for creative place-making (Gadwa and Markusen, 2010: 3); In the UK, Arts Councils have promoted the Creative Industries approach since the end of the Cold War, but more dominantly since the early 1980s (Sholette, 2017); More recently, under the New Labour party between 1999-2004, the UK government adopted the concept of 'culture-led regeneration' in its national policies and policy framework. This concept indicates the utilisation and instrumentalisation of cultural and creative practices that have become a means for urban growth and social cohesion (Vickery, 2007).

socio-economic gaps and high levels of political antagonism, and what kind of relationship these top-bottom cultural initiatives have with the art collectives in discussion.

The ways in which acts of political and artistic dissensus are constantly co-opted have led art workers and political activists to contemplate the various possibilities and limitations derived from working against what is referred here as the police order, or within or alongside it. Sholette (2017: 38), for example, describes this dilemma of an art worker who works on 'both sides' - the mainstream and alternative art world – by constantly asking: "How can artists learn to siphon off a portion of institutional power while maintaining a safe distance and margin of autonomy from the institution?". As this chapter shows, the art collectives in discussion all chose to initiate some collaboration with police order representatives, mostly municipal bodies, as a means to expand their activities to the wider public, and to guarantee some level of stability for alternative art spaces. This decision characterises similar socially engaged and collaborative art practices from around the globe who value sustainability and long-term relationships with the communities over short public interventions, especially after 2011 (Demos, 2016). This tendency has led critical scholars, artists and activists to rethink the meanings of institutionalisation and collaboration with numerous public, private and civic actors, in ways that do not necessarily limit the possibilities of working towards sustained social and political change. This is especially relevant given several encompassing crises within the political, financial and planetary system, which lead to the adoption of more complicated – and

transversal – perceptions between alternative and mainstream spaces (Jackson, 2006; McKee, 2016).

This chapter, therefore, explores the possibilities of institutionalisation within a transversal framework. Similarly to other elements discussed in relation to this framework, such as the production of new collective subjectivities and aesthetic communities and counter-narratives, this chapter asks how is it possible to maintain qualities of rupture, heterogeneity, and affect which usually refers to moments of political and aesthetic dissensus, within everyday routine practices? In the case of Empty House and Muslala elements such as budgeting, marketing and bureaucracy, have become no less central than artistic creation. Another question raised here is how long-term sustainability and maintenance of alternative artistic spaces such as *The Garden Library* (Arteam), *The Terrace* (Muslala) and *The Ramp* (Onya) can affect other non-artistic systems beyond the 'safe' autonomous space of art, such as national and ecological systems? This relates to another overall question raised in the chapter and to the affective potential of such transversal movements and institutions within the confined limits of consensus and conformism that characterise Israeli-Jewish society.

4.2 Nature in the City: Ecological Art Practices in the Works of Muslala and Onya

The first examples from which to examine the relation between institutionalisation and transversality is the works of the Onya collective, *First Station* (2014) and *The Ramp* (2014-ongoing) and the latest project from Muslala *The Terrace* (2016-ongoing). As this section demonstrates, the art collectives are different in their experiences, working strategies, and long-

term goals. However, what they have in common is the creation of an infrastructure for artistic and communal activity based on principles of sustainability and environmental awareness, and promoting this infrastructure in public urban spaces as an alternative to the current urban development in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Both collectives took over buildings that are considered by the Israeli public as architectural, business, and environmental failures, and transformed them into community centres for art and ecology. Muslala established, *The Terrace*, a communal space for urban agriculture, biodynamic bee-hiving, land art, and well-being in the unused roofspace of Clal shopping centre in downtown Jerusalem. Onya created several artistic and landscape interventions in the new CBS (*Next Station*), and opened a multicultural community centre in one of the closed entrance of the station (*The Ramp*).

This section explores the art collectives' attempts to achieve stability, through collaboration with and support from the buildings' management, shop owners, municipal units and environmental NGOs, while maintaining a transversal approach. I argue that adopting a sustainable approach requires some level of institutionalisation as a means of achieving long-term solutions for the environmental and social issues raised by the collectives. Moreover, I show how transversal qualities discussed in the previous chapters, such as transnationality, trans-scetorality, and a-centric constellations, continue to be explored and developed within the projects in discussion. Acknowledging the fact that nature and agriculture are amongst the central principles upon which the pioneering myth of labour Zionism was built, re-territorialising these concepts within new ecological constellations is argued to be a critique

of the national order as well as the neo-liberal logic that guides current municipal and urban development policies. Finally, I outline some of the challenges for Muslala as they move towards a long-term working and organisational routine. These challenges are also connected to the municipal limitations that each city offers for these types of initiatives.

4.2.1 Taking Over the ‘White Elephants’

Figure 51. Clal Shopping Centre, downtown Jerusalem. Photo by Yoninah (CC).

4.2.1.1 Muslala and Clal Centre

In the second chapter I discussed the relationship between the Muslala collective and the Musrara residents which eventually led to the art collective leaving the neighbourhood in 2014. Since then, as briefly mentioned in the introduction, Muslala has produced several short-term events and projects in Jerusalem, relocated its carpentry and embroidery workshop to Beita, a new art space opened by Jerusalem municipality department for plastic arts in 2014, and more importantly looked for a new space from which it can continue its artistic activity. During autumn 2013, a new academic programme for art, education, society and sustainability was launched in the David Yellin college of Education in Jerusalem. It was a multi-disciplinary programme with the collaboration of David Yellin college, HaCubia (dice in Hebrew) art school, and the art and culture department of Jerusalem municipality (Muslala, 2018). One of the modules in the programme was dedicated to public art and was delivered by Matan Israeli from Muslala, and Hadas Ophrat from Arteam. The module's final assignment was to create an art project through collaboration with another individual, group, business or an institution. During the work on the final assignment, two students started a collaboration with the Clal shopping centre, located in the city centre, which encouraged the rest of the students to join them. The course's final project lasted for half a year in which the students created a mosaic on the ground floor of the shopping centre. Moreover, some students formed as a new group called NahalatHa (a shortening for Nahalat Haclal which means 'a common land' in Hebrew) which organised public art events around the building alongside cultivating Clal public spaces and its stores. The positive reactions from the store owners encouraged further discussions between

Muslala members and the Clal management about a long-term collaboration. This was after the group ‘discovered’ the unused 2000 square meters of roof space in the building (Ibid).

Figure 52. Clal Shopping Centre, downtown Jerusalem. Interior (*The Terrace* is located on the top floor). Photo by the author.

When Muslala entered this building, Clal centre was going through a long period of financial and business deterioration. The Clal Centre in Jerusalem was opened in 1978 as an attempt to rebrand the city centre as a commercial centre, by building the first covered shopping centre in the city – a relatively new concept in Israel during the 1970s (figure 51). The building consists of fifteen floors of mixed use shops and office, and was built in a Modern style (figure 52). It is located between Agripas and Jaffa centre and is adjacent to the Mahane Yehuda market. The design is a spiral form with a big square at the centre of the ground floor. According to the architecture historian David Kroyanker (2009) Clal was considered a failure for multiple reasons. Its massive modern architecture did not assimilate well with the exiting Jerusalem urban fabric. Commercially, the Centre could not compete

with the adjacent market, and malls that were opened in Jerusalem suburbs in the following decades. The Centre managed to sustain itself mostly due to the governmental offices which were located in the Centre as well as a cinema, however both were relocated in the 1990s, and many of the floors have remained empty.

Figure 53. Muslala, *The Terrace*, A view form the roof. Photo by the author (2018).

figure 54. Muslala, *The Terrace*. Interior. Jerusalem Film Fund Website (2018).

The work on *The Terrace* began in 2014 when Muslala, together with the Clal management and the store owners were thinking of ways to revive the shopping centre by creating an ecological art and community centre. In early 2016, Muslala released an open call to which about forty people responded. They were invited to take part in the designing and building of the new space. After some months of intensive work, which included building a wooden floor, installing new windows for the terrace, painting the floor's banister, making divisions in the space for different units, designing furniture and lighting and introducing plants and bee hives, *The Terrace*, was officially launched with a festive costume party. Nowadays, *The Terrace* consists of a cafe, library and an open working space (figures 53-54). The space itself is divided into four sub-centres: AdamaHee (SheLand) – a centre for building and sculpting with soil; Gag Eden (Roof Heaven) – a centre for urban sustainable agriculture; Propolis – a centre for bio-dynamic bee hiving, and Prizma – a centre for movement and bodywork. Apart from regular workshops and the daily routine, *The Terrace*, hosts and organises events that reflect their vision of forming new communities and spaces based on diversity, multifunctionality and sustainability (Muslala, 2018).

4.2.1.2 Onya and the new CBS

The Onya collective is the most recent collective discussed in this research. The original group consisted of graduate students from Bezalal Academy for Art and Design in Jerusalem. Their final projects expressed some of their interests in landscape interventions, place-making and sustainability, and one of them specifically focused on a plan to re-utilise the new CBS into a communal greenhouse, as a means to resolve the environmental damage

caused by the station. The new CBS has been controversial ever since the decision to build a second and bigger transport centre in the neighbourhood of Neve Sha'anan in Tel Aviv (figure 55).[98] The foundations for the new CBS started in 1967, but due to financial difficulties and changes of management it was not officially opened until 1993. According to Rotbard (2005: 149) the new CBS was Tel Aviv's first attempt at unregulated privatisation, since it passed a major transport responsibility to private contractors without considering or giving a higher priority to the safety and health of the public. The new CBS is a grandiose structure consisting of eight floors spread over 240,000,000 square meters (figure 56). The amenities provided by the new CBS are mixed, and include shopping, cultural, and entertainment facilities, such as a night club, an art gallery, a Yiddish cultural centre, and a kindergarten for the foreign communities living in the area. Still, 40% of the station is vacant for financial and environmental reasons. Similarly to the Clal Centre, the new CBS is considered to be a great failure due to its administrative malfunctions, the old fashioned and confusing architecture, and the separation between the commercial centre and the transport centre. Moreover, it has developed a negative reputation after being associated with drug and prostitution activities, as well as being the crime scene for murders and rape attacks. The air and noise pollution caused by the bus traffic and the ongoing struggle of the local residents, led to Tel Aviv municipality to approve in 2003 a master plan in which the new CBS will have its

[98] As also mentioned in the second chapter, the old CBS in Neve Sha'anan neighbourhood was built in 1941 and was used as the main bus Terminal of the centre district until the opening of the new CBS. The new CBS is one of the biggest bus terminals in the world, second only to the bus terminal in Chennai, India.

designation changed. However this will now not happen until 2042 (Boso, 2018; Davidi and Horn, 2013).

Figure 55. The New Central Bus Station, Neve Sha'anan neighbourhood, south Tel Aviv. Photo by Chen Anglender, YNET news.

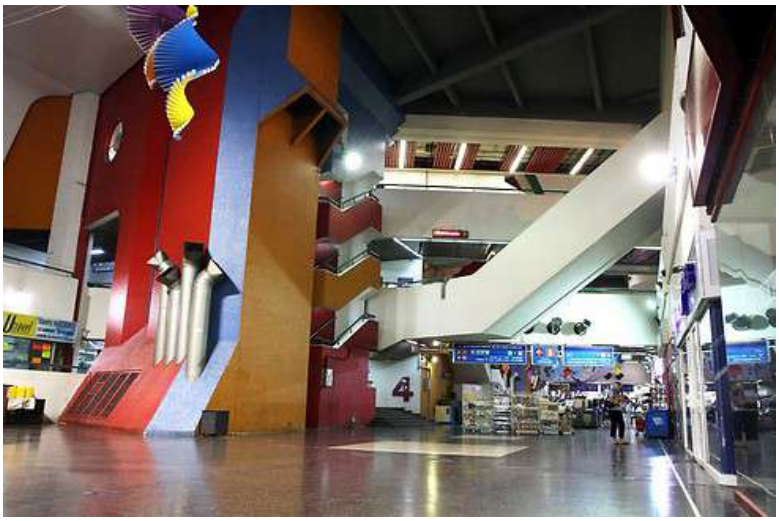

Figure 56. The New Central Bus Station, Neve Sha'anan neighbourhood, south Tel Aviv. Interior. Photo by Ofer Amram, YNET news.

As mentioned in the the introduction, Onya's *Next Station* was their first large-scale attempt to realise the collective members' graduate projects. The *Next Station* consisted of a series of art and landscape interventions around the station's complex that envisioned how the station could look once it

would shut down as a transport centre. It was the product of an open call sent by Onya collective to Storefront for Art and Architecture gallery in New York for their online/offline project “World Wide Storefront” which explored experimental civic and cultural initiatives from around the world (World Wide Storefront). Once selected, Onya released an open call inviting proposals that investigated the new CBS’s future. The emphasis on these proposals was a commitment to issues of spatial and environmental justice, DIY techniques, sustainability, and participatory approaches (Onya, 2014). Onya received permission from the new CBS’s management to operate within a designated route, as well as to use one of the empty spaces on the seventh floor as a studio. The round windows within this space gave it a feeling of a boat (Onya means boat in Hebrew) from which the collective took their the name. In their open call, Onya encouraged collaborations with commercial bodies and store owners from the new CBS, as a means of gaining sponsorship and/or necessary equipment. After several months of work, *Next Station* was launched between the months of October and November 2014.

Figure 57. Onya, *The Ramp*, 2014. The New Central Bus Station, south Tel Aviv. Onya website.

The time that Onya spent working on the project and its success, encouraged the director of the new CBS to allow them to keep working in the station. Onya received the space of a closed entrance to the new CBS to work with, which was then transformed into *The Ramp* – a communal working and gardening space (figure 57). For two years, in 2014 and 2015, *The Ramp*, hosted a music and culture festival which celebrated the collaborative effort of the communities living in the area. The performers at the festival included a Hasidic drum band, a Darfurian band, an African-Philippino youth band called “Judea Tribe”, and a Philippino kids dance group. *The Ramp* still hosts cultural and art events, workshops and regular open meetings to discuss the future of *The Ramp* as a potential multicultural community space. Apart from their work in the new CBS, Onya members work as a collective in other locations. Their largest project outside the area of south Tel Aviv was, *Seed City* (2016), a research-led intervention in the stock exchange district between Tel Aviv and Ramat Gan. This responded to some of the challenges of the area, such as the lack of green space, shade and places to sit outside, as expressed by the district’s workers. Another similar project took place in the industrial area of Talpiot in Jerusalem, which included a documentary project about the area’s workers and the building of, *Refreshing Point*, a large shaded relaxation area with comfortable seats made out of recycled rubber, a herb garden, a mirror, and a cold water fountain.

4.2.1.3 Building a Sustainable City

Both the Clal Centre and the new CBS can be understood as ‘white elephants’, grandiose and ambitious structures built with the intention of bringing prosperity and financial growth to their cities. However due to the high costs of maintenance, and a series of poor architectural and business decisions, they became financial burdens and public hazards. There are of course differences in the level of menace each building causes to its environment, as well as in the broader material and geographical conditions of the areas where they are located. The Clal Centre is mostly infamous for it brutalist architecture and its lack of integration with the surrounding area (Nardi, 2018). The case of the new CBS is more serious, since it constitutes real damage due to the massive daily bus traffic and criminal activities taking place in and around it. Moreover, while the Clal Centre is located downtown Jerusalem – one of the main tourist, commercial, and cultural areas of the city, the location of new CBS in Neve Sha’anan neighbourhood in south Tel Aviv has deepened the socio-economic gap between this area and other, more affluent neighbourhoods in Tel Aviv. According to architect Sharon Rotbard (2005: 146), the transformation of Neve Sha’anan neighbourhood into a transportation centre during the construction of the old CBS (a few meters from the new CBS) metaphorically and literally created a “smokescreen of buses [that] pushed Neve Sha’anan out of sight and out of mind”. These factors have major impacts on the ways that ecological art practices of Muslala and Onya have embedded in the areas, which I touch upon in the following sections.

Another important factor to be considered when evaluating the works of the art collectives in these buildings is the accelerated processes of regeneration and urban transformation in downtown Jerusalem and the south Tel Aviv neighbourhoods. The area around the Clal building has gone through several changes in the last two decades which have drastically increased its real estate value. These changes include, the building of the light railway that has offered an easier commute from west to east Jerusalem, and has significantly improved the look of downtown Jerusalem; the rebranding of Mahane Yehuda market located adjacent to the Clal Centre, that has become a popular tourists' and young-people's destination, offering an 'authentic taste' of Jerusalem life, along with trendy bars and restaurants open until late at night; and the development of the downtown area by the municipality by supporting cultural initiatives, events and place-making strategies (Chen, 2017: online). This investment in urban development increased the gentrification of the area from two main perspectives. First, it raised the value of businesses' space and taxes, which led to the closure of many older and small businesses, as well as the exclusion of people with low disposable incomes. Second, it transformed almost any empty property or land into grandiose real estate projects and hotels,[99] and increased the number of existing properties that are solely used as airBnB and holidays apartments. The latter has caused a significant decrease in affordable housing around the area.[100]

[99] One of the most recent and large-scale example is the purchase of a 6200 square meters plot next to the Clal Centre and Mahane Yehuda market by the real estate company BSR. It plans to build a complex with two 30 floor apartment buildings and an eight floor hotel (Levy, 2019).

[100] According to the website Madlan (Madlan), which compares real estate prices and makes real estate data accessible, around the area of downtown Jerusalem, 18% of the apartments are solely used for short-term lets, and 8% of the apartments are used as holidays apartments and are therefore removed from the letting market.

Neve Sha’anan neighbourhood has also become a large area for development which increased the socio-economic polarisation of the area. In an effort to solve problems such as poor infrastructure, insufficient education institutions, a high rate of crime, drug and prostitution activity, and lack of open public space, Tel Aviv municipality produced a master plan for both the old and the new CBS. On the territory of the old CBS, for example, a large residential, business and leisure complex called Shomron is planned to be built. Adjacent to this complex, an additional cultural centre is planned that will include a new dance campus for the Israeli dance group “Bat Sheva”, a theatre and cinema halls, as well as a big public square (Nardi, 2017; Riba, 2019). A similar vision guided the master plan for the new CBS which was developed between 2000 and 2004, however negotiation processes with the company who manages the new CBS regarding the closing date of the station and the various preparations required from both sides, have delayed the implementation of the master plan (Melnitcki and Nir, 2019). Apart from these two major development plans, there is a construction surge around the neighbourhood, and since 2011 Tel Aviv municipality has granted permits for about 35 new real-estate projects (Boso, 2016). This development raised criticism from different actors, such as local residents, NGOs working with the foreign communities in the neighbourhood, architects and scholars, who argued that the vast majority of these plans ignore the material and cultural needs of neighbourhood residents, and that they will only deepen the socio-economic polarisation between Neve Sha’anan neighbourhood, and the new developments which will be more connected to other areas in Tel Aviv. This important critique and the ways the residents and several civic society

organisations are responding to them will be further discussed in the next section of this chapter.

As downtown Jerusalem and Neve-Sha'anan neighbourhood are going through these urban changes, both the Clal Centre and the new CBS are left out (for the time being) as urban remains of previous modern architectural visions. The collectives' work therefore aims to re-designate the structures' function and transform them into sites of urban ecology and creativity, that sit between past modern visions of the city, and current processes of gentrification and regeneration. Their working model is congruent with what is known in Urban Studies as the 'sustainable city' model which, according to Birnhack, Hatuka, Rosen-Zvi, Toch and Zur (2018: 165), "involves the stakes and rights of current and future generations, emphasising the high costs of the developed world's way of life and humankind's obligation to act to reduce environmental degradation". This model works on several layers: i) spatially – to improve the structure and management of major infrastructure and urban resources, as a means to enhance accessibility, preserve the city ecosystem and adapt to future population growth; ii) physically – to develop dense, mixed-use, diverse and green public spaces; and iii) socially – to promote economic well-being and social justice (Ibid: 165-166). The following paragraphs examine *The Terrace*, *Next Station*, and *The Ramp* as bottom-up ecological initiatives that aim to achieve sustainable modes of living in the city. In contrast to architectural and Urban Studies research lenses that focus on elements of planning, legislation and permits, this analysis considers an aesthetic examination of ecological art practices and the way they re-conceptualise notions of selfhood and community.

4.2.2 Art and Ecology

The decision to work in buildings located in urban areas which possess high levels of public dissent relates to the Muslala and Onya collectives' vision of reviving damaged social relations within an urban context. On their websites, they express their intentions to bring "a sustainable change" (Muslala) and creating "positive places where people and nature meet" (Onya). Despite differences in experience, working conditions,and long-term goals, Muslala and Onya share a similar sustainable approach which is manifested through the different aspects of the projects' thinking, planning, and working – from choosing the location, brainstorming, collecting materials, and realising ideas. Each step considers the interweave of mental, social and environmental elements, and the acknowledgement of the inseparable connection between enhancing life quality and taking care of the biosphere as a whole. This is first seen in the position that the art collectives adopt towards the building, which is based on a zero-waste policy, and the insight that there are no redundant elements in nature. This is different from approaches towards Clal and the new CBS that see them as public hazards for aesthetic and socio-economic reasons which advocate for their demolition. This can be understood as a rhizomatic approach as discussed in the third chapter, of thinking with the world. As the following paragraphs show, the educational and economic processes implemented within Muslala and Onya's projects are derived from understanding how ecosystems works.

Figure 58. Shmulik Twig and LivinGreen, *Radioponica*, 2014 (in Onya, *Next Station*, 2014). The New Central Bus Station, south Tel Aviv. Onya website.

At the centre of this transformative process is the idea of bringing nature into the city, especially in dense areas such as downtown Jerusalem and south Tel Aviv, which lack large open and green spaces. These ideas are promoted mostly through different gardening methods that are suitable for the climate and density conditions of the places. Examples include, the collectives' work on vertical, roof and floating gardens, as well as the use of renewable energy such as wind, sun and grey water (mostly water coming from the building's air conditioning) as well as using artificial UV light as a way to make large dark spaces suitable for planting. The collectives' experimentation includes advanced agricultural techniques, such as hydroponic systems for growing plants without the use of soil or the waste of water. This can be seen for example in one of Onya's *Next Station* installations called *Radioponica* (figure 58), developed by Muslala and Onya member Shmulik Twig with the collaboration of LivinGreen company for Hydropnics and Aquaponics. This experimental hydroponic system was located within an abandoned radio station in the new CBS, and was designed to grow strawberries and lettuce

using LED light producing artificial UV, goldfishes and a renewable water system which imitates biological photosynthetic systems. Other models produced in *Next Station* combine visions of natural processes where wild nature takes over and covers the remains of the new CBS (*Possible Future(s)* by Dana Mor and Robert Unger and Next life) (figure 59), alongside other models that imagine the new CBS as a massive urban and communal greenhouse, for example, by removing the roof, walls and other partitions as a means to expand spaces and surfaces (platform and planning proposal by Robert Unger).

Figure 59. Dana Mor and Robert Unger and Next life*, Possible Future(s)*, 2014 (in Onya, *Next Station*, 2014). The New Central Bus Station, south Tel Aviv. Onya website.

The process of reconfiguring relations between nature and the city with the emphasis on the expansion of green spaces within an urban context, highlights transversal elements discussed mostly in the second chapter, such as trans-sectorality. Briefly, it concerns the process of circulation and exchange of labour skills between various professionals and for a shared collaborative cause. In the case of ecological art practices, executing such

large-scale and long-term projects requires the collaboration of different professional bodies. For example, when *The Terrace* started expanding, the Muslala collective were looking for a part time manager to be in charge of daily maintenance and management. Apart from good communication skills, this position required DIY skills which are usually associated with a lower rank or position with less responsibility, when compared to more traditional art and creative roles (Muslala, 2015). The elements of trans-sectorality in *The Terrace* not only attracted different professionals to collaborate, but also trained newcomers who replied to the open call. As part of the building preparation of *The Terrace*, Muslala launched an intensive studio course that lasted a few months, where the participants gained theoretical and practical knowledge that would be required to plan and execute *The Terrace*. The taught material included introduction to design (including lighting, interior and sustainable design), sustainable gardening, building irrigation systems, building with soil, and urban bee-hiving. The course took place on Friday mornings from January to March. At the end of March there were two days of building which ended with a Costume party (it was Purim) (Erev Rav, 2016). Participating in the course required paying a ‘commitment fee’ of 250 NIS. The entire studio was based on a sustainable approach to planning and design which broadly refers to a combination of techniques – traditional and more technologically advanced (cnc, laser cut and 3d printers), a holistic perception of systems and a zero-waste approach. The idea of community formation through the literal act of building the community surface has already been discussed in the second chapter. It can be argued that the long communal activity of Muslala in Jerusalem enabled a range of individuals

from different ages, socio-economic and professional backgrounds to gather, which later laid the groundwork for a new aesthetic community to emerge and be ready to take upon itself the task of building *The Terrace*.

Figure 60. Propolis – a centre for bio-dynamic bee hiving (in Muslala, *The Terrace*, 2016-ongoing). Clal Shopping Centre, Jerusalem. Muslala Facebook page.

Figure 61. AdamaHee (SheLand) – a centre for building and sculpting with soil (in Muslala, *The Terrace*, 2016-ongoing). Clal Shopping Centre, Jerusalem. Muslala Facebook page.

In relation to ecology, trans-sectorality can be understood as the mastering of new skills, knowledge and forms of expression which are necessary in order to respond to global changes and crisis. The mastering of new skills and knowledge should not, however, be understood as human domination over

nature, rather as a “necessity of mastery that can keep pace with the environment’s reinvention” (Genosko, 2009: 69). This is seen, for example, in the sub-divisions of the terrace, where each section is centred around a different type of labour and/or creative practice. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, *The Terrace* includes centres for bodywork and movement, soil and land art, urban agriculture, and bio-dynamic bee-keeping (figures 60-63). In addition, there is a carpentry workshop located a few minutes walk from *The Terrace*. Each centre offers various workshops, events and courses that include, for example, hydroponic gardening, domestic bee-keeping, producing compost from domestic food waste, learning how to germinate seeds, gather around Jerusalem natural environment as well as food foraging, and learning herbalism. These activities relate to other elements of transversality concerning the invention of new collective and individual subjects through the elements of sharing and expanding labour, creativity and developing spaces for new experiences and sentiments to occur.[101]

[101] For example, in a Muslala video on the carpentry workshop one of the staff talks about his transformative experience this place enabled him. He started taking classes in Muslala carpentry workshop after having a difficult time as a psychology student, and soon decided to dedicated his time to learn how to build music instrument. He is now a professional oud builder and player, and teaches carpentry at Muslala carpentry workshop (Feder, 2017).

Figure 62. Prizma – a centre for movement and bodywork (in Muslala, *The Terrace*, 2016-ongoing). Clal Shopping Centre, Jerusalem. Muslala Facebook page.

Figure 63. Gag Eden (Roof Heaven) – a centre for urban sustainable agriculture (in Muslala, *The Terrace*, 2016-ongoing). Clal Shopping Centre, Jerusalem. Muslala Facebook page.

4.2.3 The Urban Pioneers – Possibilities and Limitations

The ecological art works of Muslala and Onya also offer alternative insights into time-space relations by expanding a-centric constellations. This means re-territorialising their practices within different sets of references and values which are concerned with the merit of ecologically-oriented art from an environmental perspective, and the ways these practices enrich, challenge

and expand other territories, such as the national and neo-liberal discourses as well as the art discourse in Israel. Considering the central place of agriculture, nature and land within the Israeli-Zionist discourse, the works of Muslala and Onya are not the first attempts to combine art with ecology as a means to address some of the environmental, social and political challenges. Since the 1970s, artists have experimented with natural elements and socio-political landscapes as ways of responding to the changes that have occurred within the Israeli police order, as well as to critically reflect upon some of the national myths, such as collectivity and national solidarity. It is worth mentioning several examples of ecological art that emphasise the healing and rehabilitative qualities of art, as well as its avant-garde role in inventing new relations between art and life.

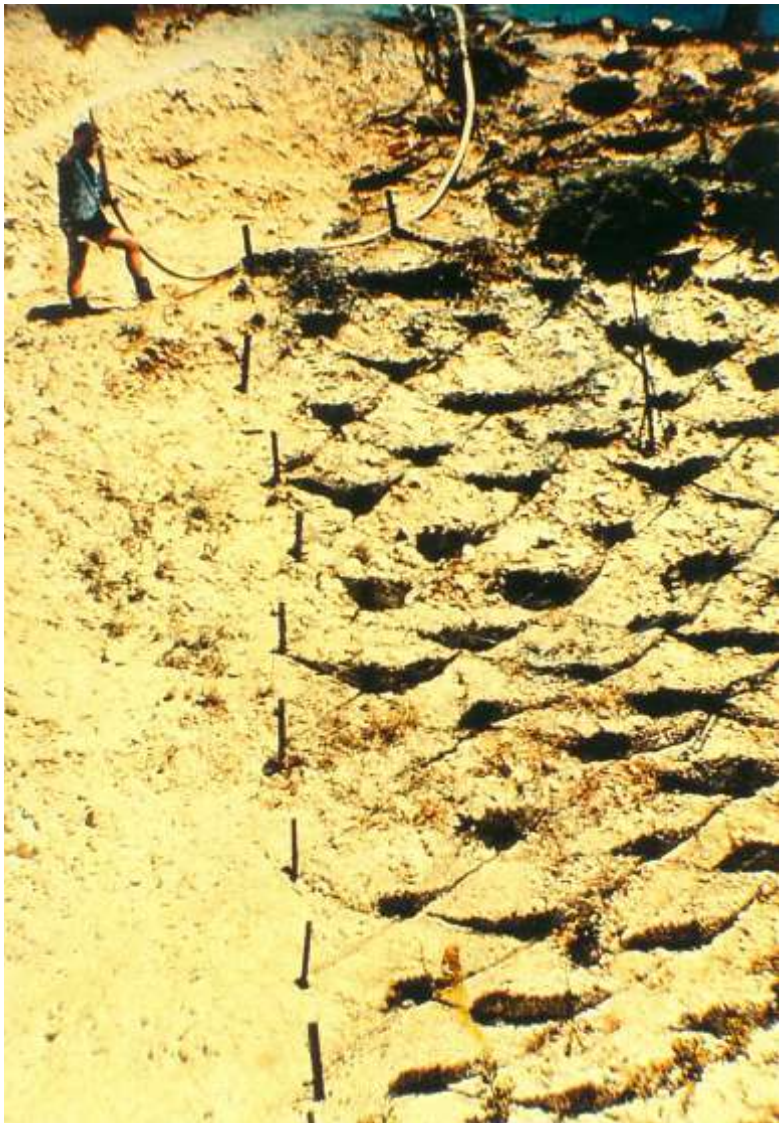

Figure 64. Yitzhak Danziger's, *Rehabilitation of the Nesher Quarry*, 1971. Estate of the Artist.

Probably the earliest example of an ecological art project in Israel is Danziger's, *Rehabilitation of the Nesher Quarry* (1971) (figure 64), an uncompleted collaborative effort between the artist, his students, and a team of scientists, to merge three abandoned quarries on Carmel mountain in northern Israel back to their surrounding environment. The process included exploding the quarry wall, creating artificial terraces, and seeding perennial plants (Omer, 1998). A similar project was led by artist and eco-feminist Shai Zacai who established in 1999 the Israeli Forum for Ecological Art. The project, *Concrete River* (1999-2002) (figure 65) was a long-term collaborative

effort to rehabilitate Etziona river around Jerusalem district, which was seriously damaged by concrete spilling from trucks working in a nearby quarry. The project involved the quarry's workers, scientists, artists and environmentalists, and its main activity was the creation of cracks and holes in the concrete that covered the river, so that the land could absorb the rain and weaken the concrete. Alongside this rehabilitation process, the project included several performances and art installations around the area which raised awareness of the river; an ecological conference, and further collaborations with scientists, environmentalists, and industrialists on developing more environmental working plans and policy papers (Zacai, 1999).

figure 65. Shai Zakai, *Concrete River* (1999-2002). Photo by Shai Zakai.

An example that is more similar to the works of Muslala and Onya is Avital Geva's, *The Greenhouse Project* (1977-ongoing) (figure 66), a collaborative, educational, experimental and sustainable greenhouse built in Kibbutz Ein Shemer where Geva was born and lives. The project is ecological as it considers the reciprocal relationships between the life system it produces. It is an infinite symbiotic process whose only concern is the maintenance of life within its system, for example, through the use of rain water for the fish

farming, and later on for the plants. The project is also educational, attracting students from the schools around the area, who together with Geva and the scientists who contribute to the project, conduct sustainable agricultural experiments as part of their final exams. *The Greenhouse Project* has become Geva's main interest, and he almost stopped producing other art projects or participating in art exhibitions. However, in 1993, he and the students were chosen to represent Israel in the Venice Biennale, where they installed a model of the Greenhouse in Ein Shemer. On a socio-political level, Gideon Ofrat who curated the Israeli pavilion in the Biennale, describes, *The Greenhouse project*, as the product of the values of that time concerning shared work and the communal life, "a kind of creativity that is connected to the ideology of the Labour movement" that was replaced by the agenda of the national neo-liberal right (cited in Khinski, 1993: 113). Today, *The Greenhouse Project* operates as a non-profit educational organisation. It is maintained and run by the students themselves, with the assistance of scientists, industrialists and farmers (Greenhouse).

Figure 66. Avital Geva*, The Greenhouse Project*, 2001(1977). Erev Rav website.

These examples demonstrate the ways the works of Onya and Muslala are in conversation with previous land and ecological artworks, and how they modify and expand the conversation. It is possible to recognise the avant-garde role of artists in promoting inventive and creative modes of action that reconfigure relations between humans, nature and technology. *The Greenhouse Project* students participate in advanced experiments and developments around the field of environmental and climate studies, such as the cultivation of micro-seaweed, bacteria, aquaponics agriculture, biological pest control, fish and zooplankton farming and bio-mimicry (Greenhouse: online). Danziger's project of rehabilitating the Nesher quarry, has inspired similar projects, such as the plan made with artist Micha Ulman and his Bezalel students in 1973, to decontaminate the polluted Hadera stream from industrial waste. This process was completed during the 1980s after a mutual decision of the Jewish National Fund and Israel Electric Corporation to clean the stream, and built a national park next to it (Zalmona, 2013). The model to rehabilitate the river that was developed during *The Concrete River*, by Zacai and others, was presented at several international conferences, such as The International Water Conference and the UN Earth Summit Conference. It also, motivated the then Minster of Environmental Protection to integrate ecological artists into environmental projects, and the rivers committee in Israel, although this decision was not fully implemented (Sklar, 2014; Zacai, 1999). Similarly, the works of the Muslala and Onya collectives to transform a station that no-one is accountable for (Onya), as well as a shopping and business centre that for many years has failed to uplift itself

(Muslala), can be seen as a filling positions of responsibility that not many people or organisations are willing to do.

The choice of these locations is also what differentiates the works of Muslala and Onya from those of Danziger, Geva and Zacai. While these artists' examples of ecological art in Israel take place in locations that are more appropriate to the national narrative, that is, natural landscapes and Kibbutzim, the task of reconfiguring new psychological, social and environmental relations means choosing alternative sites for ecological art production. As discussed in the introduction, Jerusalem and south Tel Aviv hold marginal positions within the narrative of the Zionist movement, which saw itself as a modern, progressive and secular endeavour which would bring prosperity and technological innovation to an old, primitive land (Mayer and Mourad, 2008; Shohat, 1989). Curiously, Neve Sha'anan neighbourhood (the first southern neighbourhood built between the defined borders of Tel Aviv and Jaffa) and Jerusalem should have taken a more central role within the Israeli-Zionist narrative, given the political role Jerusalem plays as the official capital of Israel. Neve Sha'anan, as already mentioned in the second chapter, was established in 1921 as a "pioneering collective [neighbourhood], with shared values and a communal ethos, built on Zionist ideological and economic principles" (Rotbard, 2005: 141), and Jerusalem holds a significant national and religious status as being the capital of the biblical Kingdom of Judea. Yet it was images of the bohemian 'white city' of Tel Aviv, or the socialist and communal work of pioneering in Kibbutzim and Moshavim that circulated around the modern Jewish diaspora as a means to generate donations and increase immigration (Zalmona, 2013). At the *Terrace*, *Next*

Station and *The Ramp*, what used to be marginal areas in terms of prosperity, creativity, agricultural advancement and technological innovation, have now become locations of art, and ecological centres that absorb the cultural and ethnic multiplicity of their surrounding areas. It is important to note that while both the projects of Muslala and Onya adopt a centralised model it is very different from a capitalist and modern centralised model of power and control. It is rather an approach that is embedded within a sustainable vision of a city related to goals such as reducing carbon print and encouraging production for use only, and not for profit. This is also a type of economic sustainability that is different from the separatist production model that developed in Tel Aviv, as well as Kibbutzim and Moshavim that aimed to decrease their dependence on local markets (Alfasi and Fenster, 2005; Hercbergs and Noy, 2015; Ram, 2011; Segal, Weizman and Tartakover, 2003).

Envisioning urban ecological centres within the most diverse areas in Israel, therefore, holds the potential for alternative heterogeneous modes of living. This is another example of how the ecological and sustainable infrastructure developed by Muslala and Onya work in congruence with nature. For example, by adopting different types of ecosystem models, such as that of the bee-hiving colony, as well as bio-diverse agriculture, a different type of living with the other is offered. Not only that, but the inclusion of new seed species, for example, ones that were brought from Africa and Asia, also suggests the inclusion of new members within Israeli society. However, issues of agricultural diversity and heterogeneity still remain a metaphor for several reasons. As already mentioned, these types of developing ecological

urban models of living can be understood as avant-garde in their pioneering nature. Yet this type of the avant-garde that aims to expand into municipal policy and city planning requires different actions. Onya mostly produce models where the long-term goal is to find commercial and municipal partners to help in promoting it. Their understanding of their work is that of artists – an identification that limits the range of other responsibilities and commitments they are willing to take. In promoting a community centre, they face new challenges such as securing budget and insurance for the new space attached to *The Ramp*, as well as developing connections with community representatives around the neighbourhoods. These new tasks introduce the collective members to new universes of references and semantics. They want to do the work of artists and designers and not of social workers and managers. During the summer of 2018 when I interviewed two members of the collective who operate on the communal area, they described the current moment as a crossroads, where they will have to decide if they will take on the task of building a new community centre in the new CBS; or maintain only the urban garden of *The Ramp*; or will leave the new CBS and continue doing landscape interventions in other areas. Regardless of what they decide, the latest development has affected the collective's dynamics, where some of the original members stepped back from leading roles, and worked elsewhere or studied abroad. More recent members have taken the role of finding more sustainable solutions to Onya's ongoing projects. To summarise, the case of Onya illustrates some of the limitations of artistic practice and artists who choose to work to connect their expertise to non-artistic fields, such as that of planning and urban

development. It also highlights the other ethical questions involving the impacts of art interventions in temporary spaces within neglected areas, which can create unfulfilled expectations. At the same time, the collective effort to find a professional body to support them can be seen as a critical call for official bodies to take responsibility for social and urban services required in the area. These are issues that I further discuss as each collective demonstrates a different type of action towards them.

In contrast to Onya, Muslala entered Clal building with the experience, the successes and the failures the collective had accumulated throughout its work in the Musrara neighbourhood. Alongside the artistic experience, it included experiences of working with communal and municipal bodies as well as other issues, such as budgeting and bureaucracy. One of the essential differences between Muslala's work in Musrara to that of Clal Centre was the type of collaboration made with the 'local' - in Clal's case it was with the store owners. Muslala's new collaboration with Clal's management was based on a shared business model. Moreover, the Clal rooftop, in contrast to the Musrara neighbourhood, is an abandoned space which has never been in dispute over issues of ownership. According to one of Muslala's members, the withdrawal from working in a highly contested piece of territory allowed Muslala to transform itself into a new community (Amir, 2016). This realisation came as a result of a long process of self-reflection after the group's first and unsuccessful attempt to join an already existing community and change it from within.

Some of the challenges Muslala has faced since its emergence still exist in *The Terrace*, and include finding Palestinian partnerships in order to develop

similar sustainable communal centres in east Jerusalem, and maintaining artistic independence. Both things are connected since they are concerned with the municipality of Jerusalem's involvement in supporting Muslala. The status of Jerusalem influences the high level of involvement of the Israeli administration in the city's internal affairs, which often leads to regulating and censoring cultural activities within the city (Alfasi and Fenster, 2005; Keidar, 2018). Moreover, the municipality's ongoing discriminatory policy regarding the development of Palestinian east Jerusalem, and its association with the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, lead the Palestinian residents to refuse to acknowledge its legitimacy or participate in its activity (Ir Amim, 2015; Keidar, 2018). As a result, Muslala is striving to become fully independent, via crowdfunding and generating income from their activities, workshops, and renting their space out. It is important to note that financial autonomy is not aimed simply because it will increase the chances of Palestinian from east Jerusalem to agree to a new bi-national partnership. It is also finding a new cause, the environment, and new sentiments, the love for the city, that is the motivation for this type of partnership. I argue that in this sense *The Terrace* operates as a dissensual figure by suspending the national, ethnic and religious group categories that shape everyday social relations, and developing new types of affiliations around shared living space and love for the city.

4.3 The NGOisation of Arteam's *The Garden Library*

The next case study, Arteam's *The Garden Library*, continues the discussion raised in relation to to the Onya collective about artists' responsibility towards the areas or the communities in which they choose to work. As discussed in

the second chapter, the project offered an artistic solution for the lack of proper educational and cultural spaces for asylum seekers and work migrants living around the area of south of Tel Aviv, by building a multilingual library in Levinsky Garden. After three to four years, the role of maintaining the activities in *The Garden Library* were shifted from Arteam members to professional staff under the management of Mesila – Aid and Information Centre for the Foreign Communities, which is part of the Welfare Human Services Administration of the southern Tel-Aviv – Jaffa municipality. This structural change occurred as a result of personal constraints, such as the Arteam's members' involvement with other projects and the long commute for some of them (for example the artist Hadas Ophrat who lives in Jerusalem). Most importantly, it was the understanding of the necessity for such a project that brought Arteam to the conclusion that an organisation with relevant experience should continue what they started. The new professional team extended the working days and the range of activities taking place in *The Garden Library.* The multilingual library has gradually been transformed into an education and cultural centre for the foreign communities living in the area. Within the context of political and artistic acts that confront the order of things, the process of co-option or absorption of these acts is often understood as the dismantle of dissensus, along with the potential to produce a new sensory reality. However, I argue that the way *The Garden Library* has been institutionalised demonstrate a different type of collaboration with representatives of the police order. While still providing a multicultural community space, *The Garden Library* activities are located within multiple spheres. Their collaboration with the Tel Aviv municipality is a

call for local authorities and ultimately the government to take responsibility for the ten of thousands of asylum seekers living without proper status. Moreover, the location of *The Garden Library* right next to the new CBS that causes environmental damage to the area, makes the members of *The Garden Library* potential partners into the struggle of the senior residents of Neve Sha'anan for the closure of the new CBS and the improvement of infrastructure in the area of south Tel Aviv.

This section has three parts. The first one examines the ways in which the structural changes in *The Garden Library* affected the aesthetics of the project. It puts emphasis on the notions of creativity and dissensus, and discusses how they have remained central qualities even after it was no longer operated by artists. The two other parts analyse *The Garden Library* as a transversal institute, by exploring the centre's relationship with the Tel Aviv municipality, and the state's policy towards asylum seekers ('infiltrator' being the legal terminology), as well as its involvement within other sites of protests. Most notably, it includes the participation of *The Garden Library* members in the 2011 summer protests, in a camp erected adjacent to the library, alongside other post-2011 combined struggles of asylum seekers and the senior residents of south Tel Aviv. I will connect these struggles to the theoretical discussion of alternative forms of civic participation in the public space presented in the second chapter, most specifically Balibar's notion of 'the right of residency' and 'the right to the city' as developed by David Harvey. In relation to the general discussion on institutionalisation and transversality presented in the previous section, the case study of *The Garden Library* sheds light on the complex relations between autonomy and

co-dependency, conformity and dissent, given the specific geopolitical conditions of the area in which it is located.

4.3.1 Creativity and Diversity in south Tel Aviv

In the second chapter I discussed the ways aesthetic qualities such as creativity and dissensus were applied in *The Garden Library*. This project (now a centre for eduction, culture and arts, see: The Garden Library) complements legal and welfare aid given to the foreign community by providing a safe haven through reading. Apart from that, *The Garden Library*, offers a multicultural space through events and workshops that celebrate the cultural and ethnic diversity of the asylum seekers and migrants. On the one hand, it provides the opportunity for individuals and communities to maintain their unique cultural and national identity. On the other hand, it allows for the formation of new and old intersections between categories of identification, such as ethnicity, nationality, religious and gender, constructed from the shared experiences of movement, migration, and deportation. *The Garden Library* also offers a different type of encounter between the foreign communities, especially the groups of asylum seekers, and Israeli citizens. The way *The Garden Library* has operated as an art project has enabled it to produce a dissensual space where everyday relations, social categories and forms of identification are put on hold. Instead, the foreign communities can perform a different kind of subjectivity that challenges the way they are depicted in Israeli media and politics. This space was recognised by representatives of the police order, such as the Tel Aviv municipality, and the police force. It was mostly through the police's no intervention policy that

made *The Garden Library* a safe space for the documented and the undocumented migrants and asylum seekers.

Organisational and management changes in *The Garden Library* were gradual and in many ways continued the core activities of the project as created by the art group Arteam. Moreover, Arteam itself was registered as an NGO from the beginning of this project to enable income generation from tax-deductible donations and charity events, such as the annual art sale for *The Garden Library*. This provided Arteam with the finance to hire part-time community and library coordinators, in addition to meeting regular expenses, such as rent for the public shelter used by Arteam, insurance, and library and art equipment (Arteam, 2014).[102] There have been several people in the positions of community and library coordinators until the current manager, Daphna Lichtman started in the role in 2013. According to Arteam member, Ophrat, it was not easy to find someone to occupy this position. In addition to the responsibilities attached to managing this type of library, with most of its financial support coming from donations, and which serves a population that lack proper status and residential rights, there is the stigma of the location being dirty, unpleasant and dangerous.[103] This is a real challenge for other artistic and communal platforms operating in the area of south Tel Aviv, such as the Onya collective discussed previously. Nowadays, no one from the original Arteam members takes an active part in *The Garden Library*. Ophart was the last member to participate on the board members until recently.

The main changes occurred once the new Mesila staff had taken on the role of managing *The Garden Library*. It stopped being an art project and started

[102] Interview with Hadas Ophrat, July 30, 2018.
[103] Ibid.

operating as an actual community centre. *The Garden Library* has an organisational structure that consists of board members, a manager, coordinators and volunteers. Apart from running the library and other cultural and communal activities, new areas of work were introduced, such as producing annual reports on *The Garden Library* activities, the state of foreign communities in Israel, as well as being involved in parliamentary activities, such as Knesset[104] committees. The expansion of activities, staff members and a new range of responsibilities affected the artistic elements of *The Garden Library*. There was less space for experimentation and poetic language, as expressed in the Arteam manifesto, due to the increasing need for a consistent, daily and organised structure that provided for some of the educational and cultural needs of the foreign communities. One of the main things Ophrat bemoaned was the fading of the catalogue system based on emotional responses of the reader. As discussed in the second chapter, it was very important for Arteam members to create an art project, rather than a community project that happened to be run by artists. This system produced a dynamic and interactive approach towards cataloguing and categorising, as well as emphasis on the book both as an object of passion and as an object that generates new knowledge concerning the emotional histories of its reader. When Arteam members gradually stopped coming and other issues took priority, this catalogue system was taken less seriously by the volunteering team.

Within the context of socially engaged and collaborative art discourse, it is possible to ask how was the withdrawal of the artists from this project crucial

[104] The Knesset is legislative authority in the Israeli government consists of legislative, executive and juridical branches. It is the Israeli house of representative.

to the maintenance of a creative, dissensual and affective space? When examining Rancière and Guattari's theory on aesthetics in the introduction, I argued that their interest in an aesthetic theory or paradigm that goes beyond art research is a useful tool to understand the values and qualities of practices that expand art making within non-artistic spaces and by non-artists. It was a starting point to rethink the binary criteria of aesthetic vs. ethics, quality vs. equality, dissensus vs. consensus and radicality vs. institutionalisation, that characterises theoretical debates around socially engaged and collaborative art. As argued earlier in this chapter, the changes that occurred within art practices and collectives who participate in broader processes of social and political change can be understood as part of a process of self-criticism and reflection that characterises avant-garde movements, rather than admittance of failure in achieving a different sensory reality. Moreover, these changes, especially the ones discussed in relation to *The Garden Library*, suggest attempts to integrate (or 'contaminate' in Guattari's words, 1995: 101) other fields of thought and actions with aesthetic qualities.

The artistic approach adopted by Arteam members is that art's potential to change social structures and norms is limited in time. After a period that lasts a few weeks to a few years, the art project will need a different and more professional team in order to keep developing.[105] The transition from an art project into a structured community centre for education and culture was therefore necessary for the project to survive. This is not to suggest that every socially engaged and community art practice should become a long-

[105] Interview with Hadas Ophrat, July 30, 2018.

term project. There is a value for projects that adopt a short-term interventionist approach. Yet within the specific case of *The Garden Library*, the decision to maintain it was the result of understanding its crucial role in providing actual solutions for some of the problems the foreign communities face. Some of these problems included providing educational opportunities for adults who cannot pursue conventional educational paths, such as colleges and universities. Another problem concerned migrant and asylum seekers' kids who lack an organised structure after school due to their parents' (many whom are single parents) long working hours, and their inability to find someone to take care of them. One of the main tasks *The Garden Library* set was to prevent a situation of kids loitering in areas with high crime rates and drug and prostitution activities (Lichtman, Rve and Shafranek, 2017). Moreover, these kids often deal with distress and anxiety that results from the trauma of seeking asylum and living insecure lives due to their undocumented status. Since they are not entitled to psychological and welfare services from the municipality, *The Garden Library* became one of the few centres that offered emotional support (Ibid). The long-term consequences of artists working with marginalised communities are not always factored into the artists' practices, and have been an object of criticism by some art critics (Kester, 2016). Although it is not the role of the artist to provide social and welfare solutions, it is nonetheless an issue that should not be neglected, especially when the artists' intention is 'to do good', as Arteam members explained their works. Arteam managed to overcome this obstacle by working closely with the Mesila organisation and making sure that there was a suitable staff to take over before their withdrawal. This

withdrawal, as I show below, is not to be confused with the dissolving of art, as theorists who critique the 'ethical turn' in art argue (Bishop, 2006; Rancière, 209). It is rather the re-territorialisation of aesthetic qualities within new transversal constellations.

There are two main ways from which to understand the relations between transversality and institutionalisation in the case of *The Garden Library*. The first is the expansion of sub-centres and regular activities which continue utilising creativity for the purposes of self-expression, strengthening social relations and senses of empowerment and solidarity. These aspects were cultivated in the different activities organised by Arteam, such as *Artistic Picnic* and *Ballet in Levinsky Garden*, mentioned in the second chapter. These events were analysed using Rancieré's theory of the aesthetic regime of art where the dissensual space produced in *The Garden Library* enables the subjectivisation of asylum seekers and foreign workers into political subjects and the transformation of Levinsky Garden into a site where democratic relations occur. Following *The Garden Library*'s organisational and management change, many of the cultural and educational activities received a structured schedule. There are several reasons for fixing these activities, for example, to provide an appropriate educational framework for the library's kids after school and during school holidays, as well as proper educational and professional training for adults.

The sub-centres of *The Garden Library* consists of a Community Education Centre that offers evening classes with skills oriented, language and Israeli culture and self-expression classes, such as photography, web design, video-editing, sewing and design; and the Children's Community Centre

which provides after-school open-door activities in music, theatre, arts and crafts, and dance for about 130 kids living around the area as well as their parents. The Children's Community Centre also runs two teams. The first is a football group, called "The Levinsky Team", that takes part in professional national and international tournaments. The second team is "Girls for Change", an empowerment and leadership programme for young girls. Throughout their weekly meetings and discussions, the team has produced several music videos and one short film that is a local adaptation for the film Annie (2014). The other two sub-centres consist of The Library Centre, and The Cultural Centre. The cultural centre holds music classes for adults, as well as hosting a Sudanese theatre group. One of their notable performances was a play called *One Strong Black*. It was written and performed by the theatre group itself in 2013 and was shown in various locations in Israel, such as public squares, community and art centres and universities. The name of the play is based on a phrase used by contractors who come to pick up asylum seekers and workers for construction projects around the country. The play consisted of scenes reflecting the everyday life struggles of Sudanese asylum seekers, as well as stories from their homeland (Maron, 2013). Apart from these centres, *The Garden Library*, also operates a fashion co-operative ran by Filipino women who produce handmade accessories, such as bags and dolls, from recycled materials given by local fashion businesses.

When considering the relations between the conditions of a certain place and the development of creative practices, *The Garden Library* demonstrates the reciprocal connection between them. It is the specific socio-political reality of

the Neve Sha'anan neighbourhood that affected the project to be created in the first place. It was also the development of the foreign communities in the area that pushed forward the decision to institutionalise the art project and transform it into a community centre. At the same time, the artistic and creative practices which took place in *The Garden Library* have contributed to the forming and shaping of new individual and collective subjectivities. This is mostly seen through the expansion of creative skills into community centre members who had never taken part in creative activity before. As already mentioned in the second chapter, with the institutionalisation of *The Garden Library* there has been a greater involvement of members of the foreign communities in the decision making processes, the structuring of educational and cultural activities and programmes, as well as within managerial positions.

Another way in which we can see the formation of new collective subjectivities is through the politicisation of *The Garden Library* and its members, by transforming Levinsky Garden into a dissensual space that confronts the way the police order perceives and depicts the presence of non-Jewish migrants and asylum seekers within the Israeli space. This leads to the second aspect in which institutionalisation and transversality are intertwined, which is through the organisational model of *The Garden Library* which operates in different spheres (communal, parliamentary and cultural) and within the changing level of collaboration with the police order representatives (mostly through the Tel Aviv municipality) and protest (by joining struggles around the deportation and status of asylum seekers, and the ongoing state of neglect of south Tel Aviv neighbourhoods). This

argument gets clearer below as I explore Tel Aviv municipality policy towards the issue of asylum seekers and the development of south Tel Aviv, as well as the different civic actors operating within the area of south Tel Aviv.

4.3.2 Tel Aviv Municipality and the Question of the Asylum Seekers

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the location of Tel Aviv as the financially strongest city in Israel, enables its municipality a great level of autonomy when it comes to managing its affairs. According to Alfasi and Fenster (2005: 354) the model of citizenship practised in Tel Aviv enables all its residents "a fair-minded relations with municipal bodies" regardless of their location within the Israeli police order. This type of autonomy has proven to expand into issues that are supposed to be handled by the state, such as the case of providing platforms that offer support for the foreign communities living in Tel Aviv municipal boundaries, both work migrants and asylum seekers. For practical and humanitarian reasons, often under the pressure of NGOs, the Tel Aviv municipality has gradually recognised the foreign communities as residents, and worked to improve their lives. This stands in complete contrast to the state's policy regarding foreigners in Israel, which generally moves from ignorance to deportation policy (Alfasi and Fenster, 2005; Marom and Yacobi, 2013).[106]

As discussed in the second chapter, the area south the Tel Aviv has become the most dense area in terms of work migrants and asylum seekers. The

[106] Alfasi and Fenster (2005) provides other examples with other excluded groups within Israeli society, such as the LGBTQ community and the recognition of non-Orthodox Jewish movements, such as the Reform and Conservative as formal bodies with a representation on the council. In addition, Tel Aviv has operated the first welfare programme for the homeless, a field that is not supported by the government budget as both the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Housing claim it is not their area of responsibility.

numbers of new asylum seekers entering Israel from Egypt drastically declined since 2013, as a result of a strict enforcement of Israel's anti-infiltration laws, the completion of the Egypt-Israel border barrier, the opening of Holot Detention Centre in the south of Israel in 2013, and the arrest of new asylum seekers who entered Israel.[107] However, by then, there were already more than 200,000 foreigners living in Israel, including asylum seekers, documented and undocumented labour migrants, and tourists with expired visas (Administration of Border Crossing, Population and Immigration, 2015). By 2018, the number had not significantly changed, but the numbers of asylum seekers and undocumented labour migrants who entered via a tourist visa decreased by almost a third and the number of labour migrants increased by 20% (both documented and undocumented – i.e. their working permits had expired). Nowadays, around 50,000 of them live in Tel Aviv (this is less than 1% of the population in Tel Aviv), and about 14,000 of them are asylum seekers (Alfasi and Fenster, 2005; Assaf, 2019; Marom and Yacobi, 2013).

This situation has imposed difficulties on the residents and the asylum seekers, and pushed the Tel Aviv municipality to initiate a policy towards the foreign communities living in its city (Alfasi and Fenster, 2005). This includes the formation of the Mesila organisation in 1999 and the 'forum for foreign workers' an advisory body for work migrants. Mesila is the main body in Tel

[107] The Holot detention centre was closed on March 2018. The remaining detainees were either sent to Saharonim prison located adjacent to Holot, or set free if they had managed to submit an asylum request form by 2018. The motivation to shut down Holot Detention Centre by the government was to promote a new policy of 'voluntary deportation' to a third country, such as Rwanda or Uganda. However, this policy was not executed after these countries denied any type of agreement with Israel. As a result, the rest of the detainees in Saharonim centre were released as well. The 'voluntary deportation' policy is frozen at the moment (Assaf [a]).

Aviv that offers welfare and social services for the foreign communities that are not eligible for these services from the state. Another way in which we can see the consideration of the foreign communities within Tel Aviv municipal affairs is through the field of planning and urban management. As mentioned in the previous section, in 2000 Tel Aviv municipality has introduced a 'new master plan' for the area around the new CBS (Fenster and Yacobi, 2005; Kemp, Lebuhn and Rattner, 2015). One of the plan's objectives was to also consider the needs of the foreign communities living in the area despite the unregulated or temporary status of most of them. Together with the Jewish senior residents, they were part of "focus groups, in-depth interviews, statistical surveys and spatial surveys" (Alfasi and Fenster, 2005: 361). According to Alfasi and Fenster (Ibid: 361; Alfasi was one of the planners who suggested an alternative planning) all the suggested planning papers acknowledged the presence of the foreign communities and the need to offer proper solutions to their everyday struggles. The selected planning "envisions the area as one in transition and assumes that both labour migrants and Jewish residents will reside side-by-side.

The handling of municipal affairs in Tel Aviv offers an interesting case to examine the city-state relationship as well as resident-citizens. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Tel Aviv takes pride in being an economic and cultural centre. This self-identification is often expressed within various city reports and policy papers, such as *The City Vision* policy paper published in 2005 by Tel Aviv municipality. In this paper the cultural and economic promotion of Tel Aviv is expressed through the "promotion and strengthening of the city as a cultural capital of Israel, and with strengthening local and community culture"

(Marom and Yacobi, 2013: 66). This is done by supporting community centres, and small and large professional cultural institutions, such as theatres and museums (Ibid: 67). Combined with a relatively tolerant policy towards foreigners, Tel Aviv provides a fertile platform for artists, activists and community workers to push forward substantial changes in the field of policy making and urban management. This is something that was seen in *The Garden Library* during its planning process, where Arteam collaborated with the Mesila organisation to get more information on the foreign communities in the areas and to create connections with the communities' representatives to build a library suitable for their needs. As already described, this collaboration grew deeper as *The Garden Library* received more resources from the municipality, and later on with the Mesila organisation's readiness to fully take upon itself the project, and regulate and expand its activities. In some of its activities, such as festive celebrations, Mesila also received support from the municipality's ceremonies department (Marom and Yacobi, 2006). Moreover, as part of the city municipality efforts to decrease the crime rate and drug activity in the area around the new CBS, Levinsky Garden, according to its staff members, has become less of an intimidating space, especially when compared to its state in previous years. Not only that, but from a non-interference policy adopted by the police when *The Garden Library* was first operated, the police is now maintaining a regular contact with *The Garden Library* staff during their activity time. They only intervene, however, when asked to do so by the staff members.

This type of collaboration with bodies whose main job is to maintain the order of things, can suggest a more complex understanding of the relations

between social and communal art practices, local authorities, and urban and cultural policies. Earlier in this chapter I briefly outlined the discussion around the utilisation of social and community art practices by cultural sectors and institutions. The main arguments of what was generally described as the 'instrumental turn' in cultural and urban policies are that they have prioritised artistic and other creative practices that can demonstrate some sort of economic and/or social values; that it has become a means of shifting governmental responsibilities onto business and civic sectors; and that the use of art to fix issues of social exclusion and inequality has become a cosmetic solution rather than a structural one. The discussion around the instrumentalisation of the arts has mostly focused around Western European and North American countries which relative to Israel still enjoy a greater financial support and work opportunities in the arts. In the last ten years in Israel there has been a growing interest by local and governmental bodies in supporting social and community art practices. This is a relatively new process when compared to the incorporation of these practices in Western European and North American countries since the 1990s. Nonetheless, given the fact that the management of *The Garden Library* has passed into a non-profit and non-governmental organisation, it is worth looking at the art project/community centre from the prospectives of the 'NGOisation' of welfare and social services in Israel (Yacobi, 2007).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the rapid emergence of NGOs and civic organisations within the last three decades parallels the neo-liberal processes of privatisation and deregulation of governmental services. Many of the NGOs that emerged within this time have filled the gap between the

public and the business sectors by operating as an executive hand for governmental policies. The situation in Israel is not different. In fact, Israel is one of the countries with the largest amount of NGOs and civic organisations compared to its population size (Almog-Bar, Gal and Madhala, 2018).[108] Most of the largest and most senior NGOs offer religious, welfare and education services, and around 50% of their income comes from the government's budget (Ibid). Some of the arguments concerning the instrumentalisation of art can be found in the largest NGOs and civic organisations that are mostly in charge of providing former governmental services, and that heavily rely on public money. These NGOs are often required to toe the line with the New Public Management approach which means implementing a businesslike working-model within the public services providers, such as emphasising customer service and measurements of productivity and efficiency (Gidron, Limor and Zychlinsky, 2015). Another criticism that resonates with the institutionalisation of art discussed here is the institutionalisation of politics and self-reliant civic groups, through their co-option into large NGOs that are accountable to their funders (Hannah, Ryan and Scott, 2017; Roy, 2014). This argument was demonstrated in recent empirical research on Israeli welfare NGOs, which shows the tight relations between the level of conformity to the police order and the large financial support they receive from the government (Almog-Bar, Gal and Madhala, 2018). This type of observation derives from a broad literature on the development of the civic sectors since the end of the Second World War, and which identifies three

[108] According to Guidstar IL, the official NGOs website ran by the Ministry of Justice, there are currently more than 40,000 registered NGOs. Interestingly, only third of them have submitted the annual reports required for a proper management permit. The most reasonable answer for this gap is that there are many registered NGOs that are no longer active (Almog-Bar, Gal and Madhala, 2018; Guidstar IL).

main areas of activities. While providing services is one of them, the civic sectors operate to achieve social and political goals, including raising awareness of social issues in the public agenda, articulating alternative policies, and shaping civic society by promoting values of social cohesion, trust and collaboration, especially in controversial areas (Almog-Bar, Gal and Madhala, 2018; Gidron, Limor and Zychlinsky, 2015).

The case of *The Garden Library*, can be seen as an attempt to challenge the institutionalisation and de-radicalisation of social and community art practices as well as civic organisations, within the neo-liberal and national limitations of the Israeli police order. First, Arteam members acknowledged the limitation of art in achieving sustainable social change over a long period of time. By doing that they shifted back certain responsibilities, such as maintaining a public library, to the municipality. There is a place to critique the way *The Garden Library* is maintained and the amount of resources granted to the Mesila organisation, as the paragraphs below suggest. However, it should be noted that the establishment of a municipal unit that offers aid to foreign communities, occurs within a national order that prevents any type of welfare assistance to these communities due to their national status. It is therefore not a way to avoid responsibility, as with many cases of social and welfare NGOs providers, but rather a means to take responsibility. To compare, in Jerusalem where there is an estimated number of 2000-2500 asylum seekers, the Jerusalem municipality refrains from providing any services for them because they are considered illegal (Alfasi and Fenster, 2005; Marom and Yacobi, 2013; Steinmetz, 2015). Moreover, the Tel Aviv municipality's acknowledgement of the foreign communities needs to offer an alternative

police order by promoting a model of a democratic and pluralistic regime. In another policy document from 2005 produced by Tel Aviv municipality under the name “The City Vision”, one of the guiding principles is that of Tel Aviv being a “city for all its residents” (Marom and Yacobi, 2013: 66). Under this title it is stated that “Tel Aviv-Jaffa will be a city for all its residents, open, tolerant and pluralistic, in which diverse communities with different needs, beliefs and viewpoints will live side by side” (Ibid). Again, this type of statement should not be taken for granted, especially when comparing Tel Aviv’s self-identification as a multicultural and diverse city to Jerusalem, which also consists of numerous ethnic, national, religious and cultural groups. It can be concluded that in relation to the national-neo-liberal order, the Tel Aviv municipality manages to not only offer specific solutions for some of its challenges concerning the foreigner communities living within its municipal borders, but also a general vision of a more inclusive, tolerant and multicultural city.

4.3.3 South Tel Aviv as a Space of Civic Disobedience

Apart from the daily educational and communal activities, *The Garden Library* also operates within sites of protest and social struggle. This mostly takes place in Levinsky Garden and the area of the new CBS, but also outside in platforms, such as Knesset committees. The necessity to still operate as a dissensual figure derives from two main issues. The first is the fact that despite attempts from Tel Aviv municipality, the state of asylum seekers is far from being solved. While Tel Aviv can take local actions, it cannot change national policy (Marom and Yacobi, 2013). The current and most urgent campaigns in which Mesila takes part are advocating for policies

regulating the status of asylum seekers in Israel, and for granting citizenship to migrants' children who were born and raised in Israel as a means to prevent their and their family's deportation (Ibid: 70). Second, while the Tel Aviv municipality promotes "a city for all its residents" model, this vision includes controversial actions regarding the development of south Tel Aviv neighbourhoods and Jaffa, that stand in opposition to the various residents' needs and interests. This derives from the municipality and other cultural and financial interests, which although they use the same language of diversity, pluralism and tolerance, are embedded within a neo-liberal framework. This type of contradictory policy is demonstrated through issues of budgeting and planning. For example, although operating as a municipal unit, only 20% of Mesila's budget comes from the municipality itself, and the rest from donations. This creates an operating environment where the most urgent issues receive higher priority, such as preventing deportations and providing welfare aid for those who need it the most (single parent families for example). In these situations, other groups and issues, such as operating a community centre, receive less attention. Moreover, some of the development activities in south Tel Aviv neighbourhoods that are promoted by the Tel Aviv municipality are not perceived as positive by the residents themselves. This includes, for example, the municipality plan to build a kinder garden complex on some of the Levinsky Garden territory and the football court adjacent to it. While there is no debate about the necessity to improve the early childhood education systems in south Tel Aviv, Mesila's argument is that it cannot take place on the only green and open area in the neighbourhood of Neve Sha'anan. According to Tel Aviv city planning, the

area of Levinsky Garden is considered a brownfield area, rather than green, which means it is designated for the purposes of public structures and not open public space (Rak, 2017). In other cases where the municipality plans on improving the cultural and community infrastructures in the area, it tends to exclude the foreigner communities and the senior residents. For example, the Shomron complex discussed in the previous chapter, which consists of a new dance campus for the Israeli dance group “Bat Sheva” on the territory of the old CBS which is also located in Neve Sha’anan neighbourhood. The massive redevelopment of the area around the new CBS reflects the other side of the Tel Aviv vision of becoming an economic and cultural centre on an international level, and by perceiving Tel Aviv diversity and pluralism as a financial asset. While multiculturalism becomes a value that is used to support local and cultural initiatives, it also utilises it as a tool to attract “the international ‘community’ that includes ‘students, business people and international visitors’” (Marom and Yacobi, 2013: 67).[109]

South Tel Aviv, and more specifically the area of Levinsky Garden and the new CBS, becomes then an antagonistic site of conflict and dissent that encompasses the numerous local and national level challenges produced by the police order. It consists of several actors, i.e. municipal representatives, real estate entrepreneurs, senior residents, new residents, foreigner communities, whose various interests lead to a constant and dynamic state of negotiation and collaboration but also of division, dispute, and sometimes even of clashes. *The Garden Library* is one example of the actors operating in this area. As an institute it is mostly occupied in maintaining itself.

[109] This quotation was taken from a more recent policy document produced by Tel Aviv’s Global City Commission which was set up in 2010 and includes a network of stakeholders (Marom and Yacobi, 2013).

However, the nature of its activity and the involvement of its members within other activist and communal platforms, opens the possibility for different types of partnership and alliances to take form. This includes, for example, *The Garden Library* being part of the Levinsky protest camp during the summer of 2011. The protest camp, aka “The Roar of the South”, was initiated by the Mizrahi-feminist group Achoti, which I mentioned in the previous chapter, a few days after the erection of the mainstream encampment in Rothschild Boulevard in central Tel Aviv.[110] Although *The Garden Library* did not take an official part in the protest camp, it provided equipment and access to its Wi-Fi. In addition, many of its volunteers, coordinators and readers – Israelis and non-Israelis – took an active part in the protest camp. In contrast to the mainstream protest camp that mostly represented the struggle of the young, middle-class, creative, and largely Ashkenazi Jews, the Levinsky encampment represented those who were mostly affected by the ethno-national structure and the deterioration of the welfare state in Israel, such as single mothers, families who were evacuated from public housing and asylum-seekers (Misgav, 2013).

In contrast to other public spaces that were occupied by the protesters of the J14 movement, Levinksy Garden continued to be a site of cultural and activist activities, and had a greater impact considering the expansion of communal initiatives that emerged after all the protest tents were dismantled. They include the group ‘power to the community’ that was established after

[110] Achoti was established in 2000 as a centre to empower marginal women within Israeli society i.e. Palestinian, Mizrahi, Ethiopian, Russian, as well as migrants and asylum seekers. It operates on different arena such as economic, political and cultural. Achoti centre is located in Neve Sha’anan neighbourhood a few meters from Levinsky Garden. Two of the most current urgent struggles Achoti involves is the against the deportation of asylum seekers and for closing the new CBS (see: Misgav, 2015).

the protest camps of 2011 were dismantled and have organised security patrols around the neighbourhood; ‘Levinsky Soup’ an initiative that provided warm meals for rough sleepers in the garden, and ‘Hyde Park’ styled events which aimed to provide a democratic space for residents to debate local issues (Kashti, 2012; Misgav 2013; SocialTV, 2015). These groups all suggest a re-territorialisation of concepts such as creativity, diversity, and self-initiative, that guides the regenerative urban planning of the area by connecting several struggles within a new civic partnership based on ‘the right to the city’. This means understanding the ways in which the struggle over equality and recognition is inseparable from the demand for spatial justice, the redistribution of resources, and the direct involvement of residents in the decision making that concerns their own residential area (Harvey, 2012; Soja, 2010). On a more global artistic level, it is another “marginalised zones” where residents “develop their own micro-political agency pivoting on a DIY skillet of salvaging, recycling, grassroots entrepreneurship and forms of direct resistance that sometimes target both conservative and liberal policies” (Sholette, 2017: 130).[111]

4.4 Institutionalisation as an Art Medium: Empty House *The Factory*

Previous case studies demonstrate different ways in which collaborative and socially engaged art practice navigate between art production and civic works, between doing ‘public good’ and maintaining sites of aesthetic and political dissensus. The Muslala, Onya, and Arteam collectives all express

[111] Sholette (2017) brings examples from around Europe and North America: Detroit Black Community Food Security Network; the Focus E15 Mums in Newham, East London; Radical Housing Network in Tower Hamlets, London; Experimental Stations and Reuse Centre on Chicago’s South Side; the Brooklyn Anti-gentrification Network; Baltimore Development Cooperative; or the Kaptaruny Art Village.

interest in contributing to society, especially to help disadvantaged populations, by integrating artistic techniques and practices within the ecological, social, and educational fields. As shown in the second chapter, the collective work of Empty House, although it emerged and developed during the times of the summer protest of 2011, was not involved with direct political actions. In fact, in several interviews and recorded discussions from different projects, Empty House members have emphasised that their work should not be understood as political. Their understanding of what it means to be political was narrow. They understood political action to be a response to issues of peace and security, which is consistent with the way the term 'political' is interpreted in the Israeli public discourse as referring to individuals as right-wing or left-wing supporters.[112] Instead, Empty House projects were about relocating political practices used during the 2011 protest, such as occupying public spaces and squatting in abandoned properties, within the aesthetic regime of art. The use of temporary interventions were then used to experiment with community formations and collaborative labour, and to create a space from which these themes of community and labour are discussed within the local national and neo-liberal context.

[112] "The agenda here is more artistic than political. It's clear it has connotations and connections with things that happen in this country" (Mabat LaHadashot, 2012: 2:00); "I think this is irritating for many people to hear from us – and I am talking about myself here – that we don't want to bring to this project political issues. And we can also discuss the definition of the political and that everything is political..." (Ofrath, 2012: 9:00-9:20).

Figure 67. Empty House, *Wagon 322*, 2014. Jerusalem. Photo by Shai Halevi. Empty House Facebook page.

Figure 68. Empty House, *Wagon 322*, 2014. Interior. Jerusalem. Photo by Shai Halevi. Empty House Facebook page.

Throughout their projects Empty House were protective about their artistic autonomy and in their first projects they avoided any institutional support. The freedom from any form of judgment and evaluation and other technical procedures that dictate the modes of visibility and participation within the representation regime of art were one of the main guiding principles of Empty House. In an interactive online text written for their fourth project, *Convoy*

(2013), Empty House wrote: “for us, the freedom of action is an essential component, and therefore we cannot go hand in hand with an institution that by its definition dictate us rules and definitions” (Empty House, 2012[d]: online). As mentioned in the introduction, this approach towards ‘the institution’ has become more flexible as their fifth project, *Wagon 322* (2014) (figures 67-68), was commissioned by private entrepreneur managing one of the leisure and entertainment complexes in Jerusalem. This complex called ‘The First Station’ was part of the conservation work of the former train station in Jerusalem that was led by the Jerusalem Municipality and the Jerusalem Development Authority. The manager of ‘The First Station’ invited Empty House to renovate one of the historical train wagons from the British Mandate period that were part of the conservation plan (Empty House, 2014). The group renovated the train wagon, using their routine open and collaborative working methods, and operated this project as a gallery space for about a year. Here we can also see the reciprocal effect of the place on the practice of Empty House. The commercial constellation and the fixed-term contract between the group and ‘The First Station’ management have shaped the reflective discussion and activities on the group dynamic and the possible paths such collaborations can create. In their latest project, *The Factory* (2016-ongoing), not only did Empty House receive a long-term permission from Jerusalem municipality to work in an empty property, but the notion of institutionalisation has become a central theme of the project. As *The Factory* developed from a summer temporary project into a full time art cultural centre, with well-equipped workshops, studios and a cafe, Empty House members have delved the possibilities and limitations that came with

their new position. Alongside major organisational changes concerned with the collective members adopting a more business and entrepreneurial language, Empty House has maintained elements of its self-sustained structure that were practised in their previous projects.

This section examines the relations between autonomous and alternative cultural spaces and the politics of urban policy and municipal affairs in Jerusalem through the case of *The Factory*. Due to Jerusalem's national status, the relations between artists and cultural entrepreneurs living in Jerusalem and the city's authorities can get complicated. It often places alternative artists and cultural platforms within a double and contradictory position of being critical towards the city policy and its financial support, and being collaborative as a way of sustaining the local creative community. In the discussion on Muslala, *The Terrace*, I argued that adopting a sustainable approach towards art production requires an institutional collaboration as a means of providing long term solutions for environmental and social issues. In this analysis on Empty House *The Factory* I focus on the elements of creativity and labour to discuss the expansion of a 'second economy' in Jerusalem. According to art theorist John Roberts (2015: 21-28) there is a broad network of art production and exchange referred to as 'the second economy of art' that occur outside of the art institutions that composed art's first economy (museums, large public galleries, salerooms and auction houses). As increasing number of art workers are situated within the space of art's second economy, and this claim is also relevant to artists working in Jerusalem, it is important to articulate art's sense of autonomy that makes this space distinct from the everyday, social and popular realms into which it

wishes to intervene, as well as to this space's "negation of the values of profit and status that define the first economy" (Brynjolson, 2015: 141). Within this discussion framework I will ask what kind of place do collaborative art practices, such as *The Factory*, hold within processes of urban renewal; and how do the modes of art production and display in *The Factory* produce a different set of values that those of art's 'first economy'? Similar to *Kibbutz DIY* discussed in the second chapter, Empty House adopted for their current project a model of an industrial factory that is associated with the national labour market and interventionist economy of Israel in its first three decades (Ram, 2007). In regards to the current neo-liberal and national order and post-J14 movement era, I will also ask what is the aesthetic meaning in adopting this kind of configuration.

4.4.1 The Creative City of Jerusalem: Urban Policies and Politics in Jerusalem

Empty House's decision to collaborate with institutional bodies was part of a maturation process that combined the need to keep doing art and investing in the art community in Jerusalem alongside the need for it to remain within a framework that can guarantee some financial stability. This led to some of Empty House's members to contact Eden company, a subsidiary of the Jerusalem Development Authority with the aim of developing Jerusalem city centre. Following this contact, Empty House received from the company a temporary permission to work in a historical building that was known as 'the Basket House' (Beit HaTene in Hebrew). 'The Basket House' is located in a neighbourhood around the city centre called HaMa'aravim (the westerners in Hebrew); the second Jewish neighbourhood built outside the walls of the Old

City of Jerusalem in 1865. It was given to Jerusalem municipality as a gift by the Israeli government during the 47th celebration of Jerusalem day, and was already designated for cultural purposes as part of the leasing contract (Abraham and Rosen, 2018).[113] However, due to the high costs of renovation this plan was delayed by the Jerusalem municipality. The collaboration between Empty House and Eden company was then based on shared interest, especially when it comes to the art collective's impressive repertoire of renovating empty properties under low costs.

On a more fundamental level, this collaboration reflects broader bottom-up processes of urban planning and policies that have raised the interests of bodies, such as development companies and local municipalities, in alternative artistic and cultural scenes. As I mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, this type of connection between urban development and art workers relate to new public policies that value qualities often associated with artists, such as creativity, originality and free thinking, as a means of enhancing economic growth and social cohesion (Aharon-Gutman, 2017; Aharon-Gutman, Mozes and Yavo Ayalon, 2019; Barns, 2019: 56; Hawkins, 2017; Yavo Ayalon et all 2018: 5). These policies have largely been implemented in major cities in Israel since the 2000s but have gained a greater momentum in the last decade (Hercbergs and Noy, 2015; Keidar, 2018). I have referred to some examples in the previous section where I referred to two policy papers produced by Tel Aviv municipality to promote

[113] These celebrations mark the day Jerusalem was unified by the Israeli army during the 1967' war. During the celebrations, there is a flag march taking place around the city and which ends with a mass gathering in the Western wall. In the last few years the flag march was part of a dispute as national religious groups are marching through the Muslim quarter of the Old City while spreading hate messages towards the Palestinian residents.

the status of the city as a cultural and financial hub. These policy papers, 'The City Vision' (2005), and 'Global City' (2010), express attempts for global integration by improving their position and value within the competitive neo-liberal market by affiliating the city qualities of innovation, prosperity and vigorousness (Birnhack, Hatuka, Rosen-Zvi, Toch, and Zur, 2018: 160). In a way, the rebranding and reinventing of Tel Aviv based on a global trendy vision of the city can be seen as a continuation of the European cosmopolitan image of the city which was associated with Tel Aviv since its establishment (Alfasi and Fenster, 2005).

When considering similar processes of urban renewal in Jerusalem, local concerns seems to take priority. Expanding collaboration with the art community in Jerusalem intended to put a break on the negative emigration of the young Israeli-Jewish population, mostly to Tel Aviv metropolis (Keidar, 2018).[114] Investing in the young population is seen both as an economic as well as a national goal (Ibid). This has to do firstly, with Jerusalem being amongst the poorest cities in Israel and secondly, with the growing rate of the Palestinian and the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish population in east and west Jerusalem which together constitute 59% from the entire Jerusalem population (Ibid). In the introduction, I mention the high percentages of unemployment amongst these demographic groups. These numbers are the result of religious and political implications which are based on voluntary and forced separation from the still Israeli-Jewish and Zionist majority in Jerusalem (Hasson, 2001; Keidar, 2018). For example, the system of checkpoints and roadblock that was established between East and West

[114] Jerusalem has a locally oriented employment system. Moreover, local businesses often struggle financially, especially during times of political instability which effect the city's ability to collect business taxes (Alfasi and Fenster, 2005; Keidar, 2018).

Jerusalem since the first Intifada (1987), in addition to the Separation Wall built in the midst of the Second Intifada (2003), have worsened the economic state of the Palestinians who used to work around the metropolitan area of Jerusalem (Keidar, 2018). As for, the Ultra-Orthodox population, their strict religious ways of living and their overall anti-Zionist approach towards the Israeli secular state, have led them to establish their own separate school, charity, and labour system. Due to their large family and high levels of unemployment, especially amongst young men who according to the Ultra-Orthodox tradition should devote their life for religious study, this group is largely dependent on the local and national welfare system (Hasson, 2001). In relation to Jerusalem's financial state, the low rate of labour-force participation and high poverty percentages, have impacted the city's budget due to the municipal limited ability to collect council taxes.[115]

In 2014, the Jerusalem municipality hired the services of the "mega-star expert" Richard Florida and his private consultancy firm, to come up with solutions to these financial and demographic challenges (Keidar, 2018: 1212). Florida's model of the creative city links economic and urban growth with a socio-economic group known as 'the creative class' (Birnhack, Hatuka, Rosen-Zvi, Toch, and Zur, 2018; Keidar, 2018). This class refers to a diverse range of occupations including creative and knowledge-based professions, such as high-tech, engineering, architecture, design, art and academia (Ibid). There are also personal characteristics that are associated with the creative class such as being "highly educated, socially liberal, and cosmopolitan" as

[115] In Jerusalem, households with low incomes are eligible for discounts in council taxes. In 2017, for example, the rate of discounts and exemption from council taxes in Jerusalem was 26%. This is equal to 700 million NIS (153,184,836~ GBP). These discounts also go to businesses and religious institutions (Amsterdamski, 2017).

well as sharing a "'common ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference and merit'" (Florida, 2002: 17, cited in Birnhack, Hatuka, Rosen-Zvi, Toch, and Zur, 2018: 168). According to this model, cities that aim to be known as 'creative cities' as a means for attracting the creative class' should not only consider the 'fixed' aspects of life quality which attract desirable population such as good infrastructures, and cultural and sport amenities, but other aspects that are aimed at the creative class "aesthetic needs", such as "vibrant nightlife, attractive entertainment venues, and local scenes that satisfy edgy experiences" (Keidar, 2018: 1212; Abraham and Rosen, 2018: 16). This has to do with another characteristic Florida identified in relation to the creative class which is mobility (Ibid). The logic behind the creative city model, then promotes strategies that are based on short-term commitment to the city and investment in "professional networks and urban scenes" (Ibid: 1219).

Florida and his company's recommendation were partially integrated with the 'Jerusalem 2020: a City Inspiring People and Business' development plan (Keidar, 2018). In relation to the art community in Jerusalem, some of the implementation based on the Creative City model can be found in the creation of shared working spaces for freelancers and creative groups, as well as for arts and crafts workshops (Ibid). They include, for example, a designer workshop in 'Nocturno' coffee shop; subsidised studios for art and performance groups in 'Beit-Eliance' building next to Mahane Yehuda market and public galleries and art centres scattered around Jerusalem neighbourhoods under the support of the municipality Culture and Arts department. Another aspect of that relates to adopting the Creative Class

model and that is discussed in this chapter is the regulation of the activities of independent art groups in empty properties for a temporary use, which is something that both the Muslala and Emtpy House collectives did (Keidar, 2018; Abraham and Rosen, 2018).

Throughout this chapter, I have pointed out some of the critique raised in relation to the utilisation of artistic and creative skills within new management and development policies. Some of the implications include the government and municipalities withdrawing from their previous responsibilities and shifting them onto actors in the the private and civic sectors. Within the context of the Creative City model, adopting the logic and the premises behind it, also justifies the divestment in long-term community building programmes and connections with grassroots and activist groups in favour of investing in place-making projects and temporary initiatives around culture and the provision of and amenities (Keidar, 2018). Another critique that is especially relevant for the way the Creative City model was translated within the context of Jerusalem is the municipality's relation towards the value of diversity. According to Florida (Ibid), there are three guiding principles upon which the Creative City model is built: Technology, Talent and Tolerance. The first two are concerned with investing in industries and infrastructures that attract and support the creative class. The element of tolerance is concerned with promoting an atmosphere of "urban openness and inclusivity of all ethnic background and walks of life" (Ibid: 1212).

When I discussed the issue of diversity in the analysis of *The Garden Library* project in South Tel Aviv, and the Tel Aviv municipality's attitudes towards the ethnic multiplicity in the city, tolerance was included in the city's policy vision.

In a study on the Creative City model in Jerusalem, sociologist Noga Keidar (2018) interviewed municipality and NPOs members who took part in the production of the 'Jerusalem 2020' development plan. Based on these interviews, Keidar concluded that tolerance was the most contested value in relation to Florida's recommendations, especially when this value was embedded within a North American and liberal context (Ibid).[116] For other advocates of the Creative City model, tolerance was not a political issue but was rather understood as a professional goal of providing opportunities and platforms between individuals (Ibid: 1223).[117] However, given the initial goal of the 'Jerusalem 2020' plan of strengthening the Israeli-Jewish and Zionist population, and the religious and political restrictions of the Ultra-Orthodox and Palestinians residents of Jerusalem, the tolerant atmosphere is mostly produced within Israeli-Jewish secular spaces whose members consume the 'other' groups' culture. On other occasions of promoting bi-national or plural spaces in Jerusalem around contested issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian

[116] This is, for example, what Micha, the principal researcher who wrote the 'Jerusalem 2020' development plan said: "I felt like I needed to reinvent Florida somewhat, and to be very sensitive about how I express the 'feel' of Florida in Jerusalem and make all the necessary cultural adaptations. When you read his book, you might get the sense that there is no innovation in a place like India. It is all about gays and no dress codes. The idea was to find the core issues that are applicable everywhere. (. . .) For Florida, diversity is measured by the Gay index (. . .) and in Jerusalem it is the opposite. When you look at the composition of first grade students in Israel as a whole (. . .) you realize that more than 60% of the public is really against the bikini. (. . .) You see that the non-secular sector is growing exponentially (. . .) and the experience of Jerusalem . . . is already this (. . .). In Jerusalem (. . .) each of the groups . . . and of course we are used to seeing this as an obstacle . . . but each of the groups expresses itself in a significant, serious, proud, and collective way. And more than that, all the fringes of the tribes flow to Jerusalem because Jerusalem is somehow more competitive than Tel-Aviv" (cited in Keidar 2018: 1223).

[117] This is, for example, what Elisheva (cited in Keidar, 2018: 1224), the CEO of the NPO 'New Spirit', said: "It is not about making peace, but about transforming life in Jerusalem to a possible alter-native for the CC. We are saying . . . if you are a secular cinematographer . . . in Tel-Aviv your social milieu is secular, but in Jerusalem it can also be Palestinians and Ultra Orthodox. (. . .) Our rationale is that when you meet individuals in professional experiences (. . .) the Palestinian and Ultra-Orthodox sectors will look less threatening. (. . .) You'll find people with humor, full of creativity, even pluralistic."

conflict, state-religious relations and LGBTQ rights, local and national political leaders hurried to condemn what was understood by them as events and gatherings that threaten the Israeli status-quo and Jerusalem's holy status. This ideological clash between the liberal principles embedded within the Florida's Creative Class model and the national and religious values promoted that shape the Israeli police order, is seen, for example, around the annual gay parade. One of the most extreme expressions of this clash happened during a terror attack in the 2015 Jerusalem Gay Parade where Shira Banki, a 16 years old girl, was stabbed to death by an Ultra-Orthodox man. Other cases where national interests intervene with the artistic activity in Jerusalem can be seen around the ongoing efforts of the municipality efforts to close down Barbur Gallery after hosting a discussion by the veteran left organisation "Breaking the Silence" in 2017; an attempt of municipal members and right-wing organisations to cancel the performance of the artist Zeev Engelmayer who dressed up as a naked woman during the cultural festival 'Shaon Horef' (winter time/noise in Hebrew) in 2017; and another attempt by municipal members and the Minister of Culture to take down a work that included a poem by Palestinian poet Dareen Tatour, who was charged with incitement of terrorism, from the *Barbarian* exhibition (2018) in the Mamuta art centre that explore the practice of censorship.

The various ways in which the Creative City model has been implemented in Jerusalem, shed light on the complicated and multiple forces that shape the city. Here I will only focus the ways urban renewal and development trends are utilised for the purposes of expanding and enabling heterogeneous, open and communal art spaces. I will look at this relation mostly from the element

of labour infrastructure developed by Empty House in *The Factory*, the type of collective subjectivities formed around it, and how they challenge some of the neo-liberal premises regarding the creative class.

4.4.2 Rethinking Labour Production

In the second chapter I discussed the element of trans-sectorality in relation to Empty House project *Kibbutz* DIY (2012). This work demonstrated the expansion of art labour and the rethinking of the meaning of group and collectivity within an artistic and social context. In *The Factory* these elements are further explored as a possible alternative economic model that can sustain the creative community in Jerusalem. After thinking about the general direction and concept of the project, an open call was released around March 2016 inviting new practitioners to join the creation of a “cultural factory that will be a productive body, will suggest communal work spaces, will present and sell its product in the factory story” (Empty House, 2016). The open call also suggested a possibility for a long-term stay in this building by emphasising that this open call was an invitation to join the first step of the project which would create the infrastructure of *The Factory*. Similar to *Kibbutz DIY*, Empty House new project was conceptually based on a living or working model that is affiliated with the national-socialist Israeli policy led by the Zionist Labour movement prior to the establishment of the Israeli state and throughout Israel’s first three decades. Within this context, the word ‘factory’ has a double meaning. Alongside its immediate association with the modern manufacturer factories, the Hebrew word for ‘factory’ (Mifa’al) also means ‘an enterprise’. This word is often used when describing the Zionist project as an enterprise, and in recent decades also to describe the

settlements project in the West Bank. In regards to *The Factory*, it is therefore suggested that the collaborative labour of structuring a factory does not come out of a mere necessity – i.e. working in the factories to earn a living – but it is the product of an ideological passion and belief towards an idea or a certain type of creation.

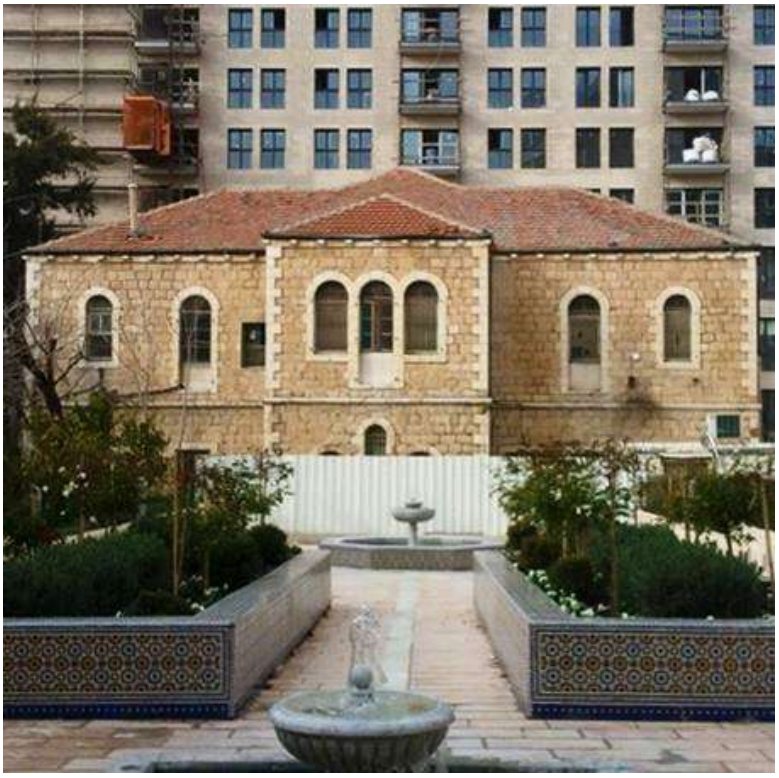

Figure 69. The Basket House. Jerusalem. Empty House Facebook page.

Another similarity between *Kibbutz DIY* and *The Factory* was the loose way in which the model of manufacturer factory was interpreted by Empty House members and adjusted to the material qualities and history of the building. For example, the working process was divided into three main units: research and development, production, and workers union. Joining one the units did not require any special knowledge or experience, and quite often the units' areas of expertise emerged. Such was the case with the ways the research and development unit's founding affected the work of the production

unit which was responsible for the infrastructure and decoration. Around the time Empty House started working at ‘the Basket House’ little was known about the history and original function of this place, apart from it being a space for several educational institutions (figure 69). The building was last used as a school for children with special needs before it was shut down a decade ago. Research conducted by the research and development unit revealed that this building belonged to the Seraphine’s, a wealthy Palestinian-Arab Christian family that escaped to Lebanon during the 1948 and returned later to East Jerusalem. This discovery happened when one of the artists involved in a different unit told about the project to a friend who identified it as his family house (Hasson, 2016). This later was included within the historical exhibition that followed the opening of *The Factory* to the public and have inspired some of the art works scattered around the house’s rooms and halls. Yet it is important to highlight that the Palestinian past was perceived only as one of the many historical and cultural layers that have constituted the new sensory experience of this project. This stands in contrast, for example, to Muslala art collective’s uses of excluded Palestinian and Mizrahi narratives as a means of reconfiguring new aesthetic constellations that undermine the Israeli police order and the representational regime of Israel art. Similair to *Kibbutz DIY*, the focus on issues such as the redistribution of art production and circulation rather than with political content that emerged from working within a politically and historically charged space determines the limitations and possibilities of forming new collective subjectivities. Empty House’s current aim of establishing a long-term home for the alternative artistic community in

Jerusalem, relys on accepting the separation between political and artistic issues as understood by Israeli public and mainstream artistic discourse. This is much more visible in *The Factory* rather than in *Kibbutz* DIY, as in the former Empty House redesignate entirely the house's former functions. And while Empty House contributes to the expansion of sites of artistic margins, and the redistribution of artistic means and skills amongst the creative community in Jerusalem, as the following paragraphs show, the collective remains uncritical towards the affirmation of national identity and narrative that comes from the art/politics division.

Within contemporary art discourse, there are several ways from which to examine the often unspoken relations between labour and art. Mainly, it includes the reterritorialisation of workers' struggles within an art context, through the unionisation of art workers, and conducting staff strikes in museums and art faculties as mean to gain collective rights concerning working conditions in art institutions (Cossu, Holtaway, and Serafini, 2018: 9).[118] It also has to do with the collaboration with and the production of artworks for the working class communities. Within the genre of participatory art practices one can find numerous examples of cases that are received differently, such as the works of Santiago Sierra (Bishop, 2006), Thomas

[118] "[A] prominent example of this is the Art Workers' Coalition (1969-1971) in New York which fought to change the structure of the art world" (Cossu, Holtaway, and Serafini, 2018: 9); The more recent New York based W.A.G.E. (Working Artists and the Greater Economy) "a network organising for the regulation of the payment of artists by cultural organisation and the building of sustainable labour relations" (Ibid). From searching the word 'strike' in the art online magazine *Hyperallergic*, one can find numerous articles on workers' strikes and protests for better employment conditions taking place in museums and other art institutions, such as the New Museum in New York, The Louvre in Paris, the Courtauld Institute in London and the Vancouver Art Gallery. In the midst of the 2011 Israeli protest for social justice, dozens of artists occupied the Tel Aviv Museum. They demanded transparency in the museum's decision making process, especially regarding the appointment of new board members, and the involvement of artists within these processes (Erev Rav, 2011[a], 2011[[b]).

Hirschhorn (Child, 2019) and Assemble collective (Sholette, 2017). In both cases, it is possible to identify an aesthetic configuration which is posited against the hierarchical system of representational regime of art, not only in terms of genres, such as high art vs. craft, but also in term of workers' modes of visibility, for example through the separation between the solo artists and the assistants who execute the artists' vision and working plan 'behind the scene'. This type of separation can be explained from looking at the broader economic movement within the capitalist system, for example, processes of automation which have the effect of deskilling of work that also can lead to a degradation of work (especially manual labour), as well as the shift from a manufacturing to informational economy (Child, 2019; Dimitrakaki and Lloyd, 2015). Adopting a critical approach towards labour production and relations brings onto the surface the often hidden economic forces that shape the production of artworks. It also provides an opportunity to scrutinise the art system from a position located outside of the art history departments, and offers external explanations for the development of artistic movements, and the institutional embrace of certain art forms over others, such as the case with the 'social turn' in art.

In *The Factory* there is a process of creating an alternative model for the capitalistic division of labour and the alienated relation between labourer and the final object caused by it. The different areas of work in *The Factory* suggest a working process that is self-reflective, open-ended, experimental and intertwined – qualities that stand in contrast to a profitable capitalist factory and are affiliated with artistic labour. Moreover, one can identify two main working methods that demonstrate the individual-collective relations

produced in *The Factory* that strengthen the production of an unalienated environment. In contrast to its original use, *The Factory* was built not as a means of something (the making of a product, the making of profit) but as the end goal. *The Factory* as a cultural centre was built for its builders and the community around it. This can be seen in two main ways. The first is through the workers' union that cultivated a cooperative environment, by organising social events, and making *The Factory*'s means of production accessible to everyone who issued a worker's card (figure 70). The second was through the working process itself that did not distinguish between the technical and manual tasks and what might be seen as more traditional art forms that were produced there. Not only there was no evidence of deskilling, but the process observed a return to other skills that artists possessed during the pre-industrial period and were seen as essential for the artistic creation. Apart from the expansion of artistic skills, the collaborative effort makes the connection stronger between the workers themselves and the place of work, knowing that the final place should be for their use and entertainment. This type of creative space also impacts the individual's effort and motivation that is put into *The Factory*. When I visited *The Factory* before it was open to the public, there was one member who decided to work with the ruined chairs that were scattered around the building. That was something she noticed herself in the space and decided to take the task upon herself. She fixed them, upholstered them and gave each a distinct and unique look – most of them are still in use in the cafeteria. Using modern art terminology of autonomy, it was a continuous, circular and self-sustained system that was created in *The Factory*, where the intensity of work and unrestrained creative

energy put in the making of objects and surfaces are maintained within the aesthetic constellation produced by them.

Figure 70. Issuing worker's cards (in Empty House, *The Factory*, 2016-ongoing). Jerusalem. Photo by Yael Hershkowitz.

4.4.3 Flexible Institutionalisation

Looking at *Kibbutz DIY* and most specifically at *The Factory*, it can be argued then that Empty House's fascination with workers aesthetics is an artistic response to the neo-liberalisation of Israeli economy and society, as well as the marketisation of the established art world. In interviews, Empty House members often reference alternative cultural halls and squatting spaces with which they identify themselves or draw inspiration, such as Katrina in Denmark (Abraham and Rosen, 2018). The use of one of the symbolic models that have constituted the workers' myth around the Israeli-Zionist ideology within times of accelerating process of privatisation and social alienation can be also compared to that of the Israeli artist Avital Geva in his project *The Greenhouse* which I mentioned earlier in this chapter. According to art critic Gideon Ofrat (1993) who curated Geva's project in the 1993 Venice Biennale the project emerged out of socio-political and economic crisis and responds to the decline of the Labour party and labour cooperative

modes of production – most fundamentally, the privatisation of the Kibbutzim in Israel. At the same time, Geva's participation in the Biennale, after a few decades of almost refraining from taking part in any institutional artistic activity, suggests some level of participation within the contemporary art system (Ibid). Similarly in *The Factory*, what can be seen at first glance as a nostalgic withdrawal from art's first economy, using Robert's (2015) terms, can be argued to be more of an attempt to reconfigure new relations between community, art labour and place. *The Factory* might hold attachments to socialist forms of living and working, and expand the sites where these possible worlds can take place. However it does not aim to take down or replace the economic and social system in which it operates. It is worth looking then on the reciprocal ways in which this system and the aesthetic constellation produced in *The Factory* shape one another.

Figure 71. Meydad Elyahu, wall fresco (in Empty House, *The Factory*, 2016-ongoing). Jerusalem. HaMiffal Facebook page.

Figure 72. Paul Taylor, wall relief (in Empty House, *The Factory*, 2016-ongoing). Jerusalem. HaMiffal Facebook page.

When returning to the three stages that constitute an aesthetic community, the use of sensorial means and materials (first stage) have an important role in delimiting and make visible and audible the type of assemblage the

community wishes to be part of. For example, the sustainable and eco-friendly values practised within the projects of Muslala and Onya collectives are embedded within sculptural elements, such as geodesic domes and beehives, and working materials that include local flora and fauna and industrial waste. In *The Factory* it is possible to identify an aesthetic transition that followed Eden company's decision to continue renewing the working contract with Empty House for an unknown period of time. Some of the first and permanent artworks created and events produced in *The Factory* when it was more oriented towards labour aesthetic and exploring the materiality and history of the building can demonstrate this transition. One can still find Meydad Eliyahu's fresco in the main hall depicting abstract figures of workers with yellow working hats on a heavenly background that resonates with Renaissance ceiling painting (figure 71); Paul Taylor's relief on one of the bar/kitchen walls of a head of worker in a social realistic style both in a positive and negative (inverted) scheme (figure 72); and Noa Arad-Yairi's fountain of a woman's body divided by layers of glass in her upper and lower body and decorated local ornamented ceramics tiles (figure 73). The events that took place during the first summer months included open working days, and a series of panel discussions on the relations between art and the city, with emphasis on the current changes within Empty House activities.

Figure 73. Noa Arad-Yairi, fountain (in Empty House, *The Factory*, 2016-ongoing). Jerusalem. Photo by Smadar Sheffi.

Following the renewal of the working contract between Empty House and Eden company, *The Factory* was relaunched during winter 2016/2017. Although continuing with the original intentions of creating a cultural space for the creative community in the city it is possible to identify several changes. The first was the de-collectivisation of Empty House that was part of the negotiation with Eden company. Instead of signing the working contract as a collective, there were signatures of individual artistic directors or entrepreneurs. According to interviews with Empty House members, this led to the decision that *The Factory* is no longer an Empty House project, but rather a by-product ran by individuals who are part of the collective that is not currently active. This suggests one way in which the Creative City model has shaped the organisational structure of *The Factory* by introducing new managemental terminology. The other change has to do with the integration of new ‘vibrant’, ‘edgy’ and ‘attractive’ sensory experience that expresses the

needs of the creative class into the existing aesthetic constellation of *The Factory*. When looking at images of the space of *The Factory* in its early to later stages there is a shift from a chaotic construction site-feel to a hipster, industrial-bohemian chic. This is mostly seen around the extension of the kitchen, for example, that now includes a fully equipped bar and local artisan vegetarian cuisines (figure 74). The art and music events have become more ambitious and sophisticated and include a PJ party (figure 75), kids rave, streaming party between *The Factory* in Jerusalem and the Alchemist Bar in Nairobi, and an ArtBNB event where international artists were invited for a residency.

Figure 74. Empty House*, The Factory*, 2016-ongoing. Kitchen. Jerusalem Photo by Yelena Kvetny. HaMiffal Facebook page.

The artistic and conceptual debate around institutionalisation that has taken a bigger part when Empty House worked on *Wagon 322* and the first few months of *The Factory*, has become less urgent within the current cultural agenda of *The Factory*. It can be argued that this kind of transition was perceived positively due to the minor engagement of Eden company within *The Factory* internal affairs. In a research on artistic squatting in Israel,

Abraham and Rosen (2018) describe this kind of collaboration between creative and artistic groups and institutionalised bodies as 'flexible institutionalisation' which permits long-term activities in empty properties. The managemental and financial model in *The Factory* is still largely independent and determined by the artistic directors rather than the municipal company that provides the funding. In this sense, the main working tactic of Empty House – i.e. identifying 'black holes' on the map and invading them – was maintained by seizing an "evasive opportunity window" as described by one of *The Factory*'s current artistic directors (Bakshi, 2017: online). This approach towards an institutional collaboration, therefore, points at the way bottom-up processes can benefit with the alternative and independent creative community, especially when the regulatory process of allocating empty spaces is still in its burgeoning phase and as such expand the possibilities of local groups to participate in the spatial shaping of their city. This, for example, can be relate to issues of what constitute economic and urban growth, and what type of relationship should residents have between themselves and their place of living. It is worth thinking about the political potential of *The Factory*'s locations in one of the most expensive and developed areas in Jerusalem might have. *The Factory* is situated right next to the Consulate General of the United States (now the U.S. embassy),[119] the Waldorf Astoria Jerusalem hotel and Mamila shopping and luxurious residential complex. Generally, the relationship between *The Factory* and the mentioned institutions are characterised with disregard towards the other

[119] The Consulate General if the United States in Jerusalem was a separate diplomatic mission from the United States embassy which was located in Tel Aviv, and it was mostly accredited to Palestinian residents of Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. After Trump's decision to relocate the embassy to Jerusalem in May 2018 the Consulate General was gradually merged with the embassy until formally ceased operation on March 2019.

side's presence. Yet, the continuous growth of *The Factory* in space (it is now been extended to the second floor) can indicate the expansion of a creative community that largely is committed to the city (in contrast to the mobile and self-centred element characterising Florida's creative class). The thickening of the creative community in Jerusalem can then encourage the development of more artistic bases that can operate and manoeuvre between the multiple public, private, national and financial interests that impact the city's future directions.

Figure 75. PJ party (in Empty House, *The Factory*, 2016-ongoing). Jerusalem. Photo by Yair Meyuhas. HaMiffal Facebook page.

4.5 Summary

This chapter examined processes of institutionalisation and regulation within the work of the art collectives. This discussion was connected to a more general question of how a political moment or an act can be maintained in the long run. This question is often repeated in discussions on social

movements and social and activist art practices. As I have shown in the beginning of this chapter, theoretical analysis both in art and political studies emphasise the temporary aspect of activist and artistic interventions that aim to challenge the social, economic, political and cultural assumptions of a given order. Within the context of dissensus and change, the term 'institutionalisation' can be perceived critically and even negatively as it often indicates the neutralisation or co-optation of political or aesthetic dissensus (be it an object, movement, or an event) in order to maintain it within the confined limits of the police order.

In this chapter I argued that looking on the issue of institutionalisation from a transversal perspective can suggest different insights on the possibilities and limitations of producing a long-term infrastructure for social, political and cultural change. A transversal approach for institutionalisation means examining how qualities, such as heterogeneities, multiplicity, rupture, a-centrality and affect, are maintained and addressed when the art collectives initiate a collaboration with the police order in order to expand their activities and guarantee some level of financial and spatial stability. This chapter examined in depth the socio-political and ecological contexts that prompted the art collectives to deepen their relations with municipal bodies and NGOs. This included, for example, development plans and governmental policies that had an environmental and socio-economic impact on peripheral areas as well as marginalised and low-income communities. The changing context from which the art collectives operate demonstrated also how change can be understood as a reciprocal force. Meaning not only how art collectives respond to a specific socio-political, ecological or cultural problem, but how

this problem affects the art collectives' working methods, modes of organisation and long-term agendas. Another point of discussion that was raised in relation to the art collectives was the question of artistic creativity, and how it is maintained within a context of bureaucracy, working contracts and marketing that have become part of the art collectives' institutionalisation.

Muslala's moving to Clal centre have raised questions regarding the original aims they articulated when the collective was still working in Musrara: what has changed in relation to their 'external' position within the space they choose to intervene? What kind of collaboration and partnership with the 'local' is expected? And, how it might affect the artistic independence and expression that Muslala wants to maintain? From the analysis of the first few years of planning and executing, *The Terrace*, it was argued that while the location and working framework have changed, in many ways the initial goals the collective set to itself, such as the reconfiguring of social relations between the diverse communities living in Jerusalem, have remained. The new location and project allowed for these initial aims to take a deeper root. In Clal Centre, it was possible not by responding to exiting ethnic, national and religious identities, but by moving away from them and finding new sets of references and values that might connect the different communities. Choosing to focus on issues such as well-being, through movement and land art workshops, as well as new skills development as a means of restoring nature within the urban space – allowed for the production of new surfaces of attachment and connection. Furthermore, the moving away from charged historical and political spaces into a commercial space, as well as forming a

clearer mutual understanding of the type of collaboration between the art collective and Clal's management and shops' owners, allowed for a new collective subjectivity to be emerged without this collectivity 'threatening' the existence of another community.

Analysing *The Terrace* alongside Onya's landscape and ecological interventions also emphasised the conditions of space – urban, natural, commercial – in reconfiguring subjective, social and environmental relations. The section on ecological art in Israel compared the ecological and communal work of Muslala and Onya in the urban and cultural periphery (Jerusalem and south Tel Aviv) to historical and contemporary ecological artworks in Israel. The last were produced in Kibbutzim and natural landscape that are much more connected to the national and pioneering narrative of the Israeli police order. The art collectives reconfigured the theme of nature and ecological responsibility within a transversal framework that considers the multiple, transnational and a-centric characteristics of the sites in which *The Terrace* (Muslala), *The Next Station* and *The Ramp* (Onya) were produced. This transversal framework posits Jerusalem and south Tel Aviv, usually framed as neglected, violent, and poor areas – as pioneering both in the political and artistic fields.

One main difference that the comparison between Muslala and Onya have shown was their understanding of autonomy. While Muslala aims to become a self-sustained art, communal and ecological centre that does not rely on public funding, Onya understands autonomy as the continuing ability to produce art and landscape interventions without needing to deal with the logistical and bureaucratic burden that comes from running a multicultural

centre in an under-developed area. The ways in which Onya has searched for a non-profit or non-governmental partner who will share this burden or take it entirely, do not necessarily indicate the failure of socially engaged art to achieve a social change. Onya's attempts to not be fully immersed in a social work can be interpreted as a critical call on the ways public and governmental bodies encourage creative and engaging initiatives of artists as a means to shift public affairs and services to the private and civic domain, thus avoiding taking responsibility for the deterioration of social support and the deepening of socio-economic inequalities.

The analysis of Arteam has demonstrated a different conclusion on the relations between artists and the areas and communities in which they choose to work. One of the ethical implications of *The Garden Library* was that 'external' art practitioners with good intentions to help the other should consider the long-term consequences of a socially engaged art practice within a community that lacks social support. The overwhelming realisation of the crucial necessity of such a project in the area of south Tel Aviv, and the understanding that the psychological, education and cultural conditions of the asylum seekers and labour migrants communities require a professional team, led Arteam to withdraw from the everyday management. Despite the artists' withdrawal from the project, the analysis of *The Garden Library* demonstrated how aesthetic and political dissensus has remained – if not increased – following the NGOisation of *The Garden Library*. The NGOisation of the project was discussed in terms of transversal institute thus pointing out the transnational, trans-sectoral, a-centric, eruptive and affective elements which characterise *The Garden Library's* new modes of action and

organisation in space. This was seen especially in relation to the critical and dissensual position the library's workers and volunteers, many of whom came from the municipal humanitarian organisation Mesila, took against the Tel Aviv municipality's vision of south Tel Aviv. The NGOisation of *The Garden Library* can be seen as another manifestation of the problematic role of non-profit and non-governmental organisations in covering social and welfare support that were once under governments' terrains. However, the emancipatory, empowering and creative paths in which *The Garden Library* has taken in order to provide these needs and support are what make *The Garden Library* a significant transversal movement with a long-term ability to undermine the neo-liberal and national limitations of the Israeli police order.

One of the aspects from which it is possible to follow the various changes the art collectives were going through is the relation between the latest institutionalised projects and the art collectives' name. In the case of Muslala and Onya, their name remained the same despite moving to a new location. It was shown how keeping the name maintained a connection to the art collectives' initial goals. In the case of Arteam and *The Garden Library*, once the art collective stopped operating it the library's name was expanded from *The Garden Library* to *The Garden Library: Centre for Education Culture and Arts*. Adding the second part to the original name can be seen as attaching another layer to the project's name which signifies the latest artistic and communal direction this project took.

In the section of this chapter that examined Empty House's last project, *The Factory*, there is an interesting shift where the name of the project took over the identity of the new collectivity emerged with it. This only happened after

the first few months of *The Factory* where Eden company decided to expand the working contract and as a result demanded some structural changes. This demand first signified the de-collectivisation of Empty House, as the working contract required individual artistic directors to sign it. Some senior members of the collective also left as the new direction of *The Factory* less suited them. Moreover, the aesthetics of the building, the artworks and contents have also changed and articulated a more of an industrial-chic and hipster style. However, in comparison to *The Garden Library*, even though there were modifications in the name, most of Empty House members who participated in past projects have continued to work in the new institutionalised form of *The Factory*. Other elements from previous projects, such as the expansion and circulation of artistic labour and skills, the deepening of professional and intimate relations amongst the members, and the formation of a self-sustained artistic space for the creative community in Jerusalem, have also remained in *The Factory*. By avoiding referring to the new institutionalised project as the product of Empty House whilst still acknowledging the heavy affiliations of this project with the art collective, posits *The Factory* and its creative community in an in-between position, in relation to the project's attitude towards the municipal regeneration plan and conservative attitude towards alternative artistic platforms in the city. This attitude is embedded within the national and neo-liberal logic of the police order, and Empty House's explicit agenda towards it has remained vague. As demonstrated in *Kibbutz DIY*, the ability to operate in-between categories, histories, narratives while suspending the police order's modes of identification and representation is what make the aesthetic regime and

aesthetic art privileged. *The Factory* demonstrates this privilege both as an object of criticism, especially in relation to artists' treatment of the Palestinian history of the house, and as a possible direction from which creativity, community and urbanity can be intertwined and imagined in ways in which the everyday relations in Jerusalem can often prevent.

5. Conclusions

> We are watching from a rooftop, much like that evening before everting started, over our besieged city. It has been almost a year since the day our last refuge was destroyed. Since then, we have brought smoke meters and blown the assembly horn. Slowly, more and more refugees have gathered, tiered, busy, but the fire in their eyes remained. This is how we have turn from individuals into a rabble, and from a rabble into a live tribe.

This text was written by the art collective Empty House prior to the launch of their fourth project *The Convoy* (2013). It suggests a reflective and quite nostalgic reflection on the projects created by the collective that considers the challenges and accomplishments of forming a new creative collective in Jerusalem. It also emphasises the symbolic language used by Empty House who emerged as an art collective in the last days of the 2011 Israeli protest which largely revolved around the shortage affordable housing. What is significant from the perspective of this thesis is that Empty House have reterritorialised the politics of the protests into the aesthetic regime of art. Through their projects, they contemplated the notions of home, territory, boundaries, belonging and collective formation by experimenting with temporary forms of living in abandoned spaces. By relocating a political problem into the domain of art, Empty House produced dissensual spaces in which these notions have been aimed at the processes of art making and circulating. They blurred distinctions between the working process and the final product, between art labour and manual labour, and between museum and home. The transformative process from becoming individuals to a mass and then a tribe, indicates a broader phenomena within the political and artistic regimes of redefining relations between individual and collective forms of being. In this thesis I argued that this process characterises both

social movements and art collectives that have been active in Israel within the last decade.

I use texts written by Empty House in the introduction and in the conclusion to define the subject and research questions of this thesis. I looked at the emergence of socially engaged and collaborative art practices in Israel in the last decade. I focused on the geographical locations of Jerusalem and South Tel Aviv where concentrations of these art practices can be identified due to the cultural and political significance of both cities, as well as the national, ethnic and religious diversity that exists in these places. I asked what is the socio-political context that has motivated what is understood in contemporary art discourse as the 'social turn' within Israel art, and what are the possibilities and limitation in promoting social change through the arts in a broader artistic context. Since the art collectives examined in the thesis perceive their works as art, regardless of the socio-political context of their practice, I also asked what is the aesthetic effect of such a practice on the Israeli art discourse and making. I choose four art collectives as the main case studies of the thesis: Muslala (2009-ongoing), Arteam (2009-2012/13), Empty House (2011-ongoing), and Onya (2014-ongoing). Similar to Empty House, each collective has emerged out of a sense of necessity or urgency with the intention of reacting in artistic terms to some of the social and political challenges faced by Israeli society. In the introduction, I explained that these art collectives are appropriate case studies, because of their rich and complex artistic repertoire, and because of the similarities and differences in the collectives' artistic and political goals. Furthermore, I outlined the political and cultural history of the areas the art collective work –

i.e. Jerusalem and south Tel Aviv – and highlighted the elements which make these areas potential sites of artistic and political dissensus that reconfigure existing binaries between the centre and periphery and mainstream and alternative. The qualities of these art collectives and their experience can shed light on the various challenges and potentials changes of producing socially and politically oriented art within the current socio-political climate in Israel.

As shown in the chapters, the collectives adopt aesthetic forms and techniques that characterise socially engaged and collaborative art practices that are active around the world in the last twenty to thirty years, such as murals, community gardens, public libraries, multicultural festivals and community art centres. The collectives' projects also tend to be temporary, located outside of the mainstream art institutions in various public locations, such as parks, shelters, shopping and transportation centres, and empty properties, and are produced with the collaboration of non-artists. As such, this thesis examined the ways in which adopting such modes of art making contribute to the expansion of plural, dialogical, inclusive and creative spaces both within the field of art discourse and practice as well as the political.

By analysing socially engaged and collaborative art practices in Israel within the last decade, I expanded the academic conversation on the relations between art and politics from three perspectives. The first involves looking at these particular examples of socially engaged and collaborative art practice that have yet gained academic attention. With the exception of a few sociological and geographical studies conducted on Muslala and Empty House that were mentioned in the introduction, there has not been a

comprehensive analysis on these four art collectives. As such the conclusion contribution to knowledge was first by collecting data on the art collectives, both through desk work and field work, and second by situating them within an interdisciplinary framework that is derived from art history, politics, social science, cultural and urban studies. The second perspective is concerned with geographical and conceptual expansion of socially engaged art that have taken place outside the U.S. and Western European countries. This is not simply to point at another location where socially engaged art practices occur, but to demonstrate the ways in which artistic trends are translated within different cultural, social, and political contexts, as well as the effect of the local political and art institutions on the emergence of alternative, critical and political art practices. For example, the small art community and market in Israel makes it difficult for artists whose works do not confirm to the dominant cultural and artistic taste to secure financial support or opportunities to show their work. Moreover, in Western countries large amounts of socially engaged art projects rely on public money as a way to critique the art market and private funds that are affiliated with multinational corporation. However, in Israel, receiving funding from public bodies, such as governmental offices or municipalities can be present no less of an ethical dilemma for certain artists than being supported by private funding sources. This is mostly due to the Israeli policy in the Palestinian Occupied Territories, as well as the tendencies of public funders, such as the Ministry of Culture and Sport, the national lottery (Mifal HaPais) and the Jerusalem Municipality, to censor and limit artistic expressions. These limited opportunities for earning a living as an artist in Israel, alongside the political stance many

artists take in relation to the political discourse in Israel, have an important impact on the formation of alternative and independent platforms, such as journals, galleries, workshops and cultural centres. These platforms are often overlooked by the mainstream Israeli art discourse that perceive this type of socially and politically oriented art as a form of activism, social or educational work, but not as a work of art per se. This, for example, can explain why there have been academic studies on socially engaged and collaborative art practices conducted in the departments of sociology an urban studies in Israel, but not from the art departments. As a result, this thesis intended to shed light on practices that are overlooked not only by the Western-oriented art discourse, but also by the local Israeli art discourse.

Understanding socially engaged art not solely from a Western perspective also relates to the genealogies that constitute socially engaged art theory (Bishop, 2012; Kester, 2011; Raunig, 2007). They are largely derived from western art history, especially the legacy of avant-garde art and the modern debate on artistic autonomy, as well as social movements and historical landmarks that shape the political landscape in Europe, such as the Paris Commune, the first World War and the Russian Revolution, the events of May 68', the fall of the Iron Curtain, and emergence of the anti-globalisation movement since the 2000, and the Occupy movement. As discussed in the introduction, Israeli art history was largely shaped by Western art narratives and models. However, this type of affiliation with Western modes of cultural production was made possible through the exclusion of other types of makings that did not fit with the secular and modernist artistic taste that was cultivated by Ashkenazi Jewish curators, art historians and critics since the

birth of Israeli art. Much of these excluded art forms were integrated within the projects discussed in this thesis, such as craft and folklore music. As such, they not only enabled the expansion of artistic skills and the visibility of artists who work on the margins, but they also opened possibilities to reconfigure new connection between time, space, and action.

This relates to the third perspective from which this thesis expands to the conversation on the relation between art and politics. By connecting the recent proliferation of socially engaged and collaborative art practices in Israel with the mass political subjectivisation of Israeli citizens around the J14 movement, this thesis suggested a more substantial correlations between artistic and political practices. For this reason, this thesis relied on the works of Rancière and Guattari, as they both consider art's relation with non artistic domains, such as the political, ethical and ecological domains, and they both understand aesthetics as a broad enquiry field of sensibility from which to look at various political, sociological and psychobiological phenomena. This theoretical framework enabled me to denote the structural and conceptual limitations existing within the mainstream art discourse (referred to here also as the representational regime of art) when it comes to evaluating political and critical works of art. This issue was discussed in the third chapter where I showed, for example, how the political struggle of the Black Panthers movement and even the names of the members were ignored in favour of discussing the documentary qualities in the photographic works of Ya'acov Shofar, or alternatively, how suggestions for exhibitions that aim to challenge the mainstream Israeli art narrative, such as was the case with the

exhibitions *Mother Tongue* or the cancelled exhibition *Black Panther* [feminine declension], which were ignored by critics and art historians.

The theoretical framework used in this thesis also enabled an alternative reading of art and politics in Israel. It provided a different understanding of the notion the political which is based on Rancière's definition of a disturbance within the common sensory experience. More broadly, it used Guattari's notion of transversality as both a model from which to look at Israeli art, and both as a quality that can be found in the art collectives' projects. Transversality stands in opposition to the dialectic model that have shaped both the mainstream and critical Israeli art discourse. It suggests a non-linear, decentralised, and eruptive reading of phenomena, concepts, practices and events. These main notions were applied to suggest a different connection between art and politics that is not simply based on a representation – i.e. works of art that deals with a political content – but rather on a configuration of the modes and conditions of visibility. The art collectives discussed in the thesis produced new aesthetic constellations that offer different interpretations for the questions where, how, and by whom art is created. Each constellation had its own assemblages of references and values that have shaped the sensorial forms and experiences which blur the binary categories between local-universal, Israeli-Jewish and Jerusalem-Tel Aviv that the dialectic model has produced. Moreover, this thesis demonstrated how the extensive scale of communal art spaces, such as *The Terrace* (Muslala), *The Factory* (Empty House), and *The Garden Library* (Arteam), have been able to produce an economic base that can sustain itself even without the support of the art market or the major museums and

galleries (referred here as art's fist economy), because of their dynamic and dialogical relations with numerous sectors, such as the art and cultural sector, the third or civic sectors (NGOs and NPOs) and the public sectors (municipal units). The following paragraphs reflect on some of the main findings concerning the research questions. They are structured within three sections under the sub-titles of identity formation, change, and time-space relations. These themes have outlined the thesis's structure, however they appear here in a different order. The first section, identity formations, reflects on the second chapter where I discussed the production of collective subjectivities within the context of nationalism and the neo-liberal in Israel. The second section, change, reflects on the fourth chapter's issue of institutionalisation. The last section, time-space relation, reflects on the third chapter that analysed the aesthetic constellations in Musrara. It appears last, as this theme is also connected to possible directions from which to continue this research.

5.1 Identity Formation

The proliferation of collaborative art practices within the last decade is unique within the history of Israeli art. It is true that Jewish artists have always formed groups even prior to the establishment of the Israeli state. However, the last decades of art collectives differ from previous examples, as the artistic outcome is the result of a collaborative labour, rather than a collection of individual works that share conceptual and stylistic characteristics. Another important difference is that for many artists in the past, forming up as a group was a strategy to get a greater visibility within the representational regime of Israeli art. Quite often the struggle over cultural hegemony was described in

term of groups or teams, such as New Horizons groups vs. Team Raffi (artist Raffi Lavie), or the Midrasha School vs. the New Jerusalemite School. As shown in the introduction, with the exception of Arteam, all of the art collectives discussed in this thesis were formed by young artists, many of them were still art students or recent graduates. One can argue that the adoption of collective modes of identification has become a critical response to the adoption of neo-liberal policies around the world which has shaped the economic, public and domestic domain around the individual (Gilbert, 2014; Kester, 2011). This argument has gained more dominance with the emergence of mass movements around the world between 2011-2013 that have called for more socialist and participatory forms of governance (Azellini and Sitrin, 2014). The large involvement of artists and the use of artistic means within these protests indicated a parallel crisis in the modes of representation, both within the political and art system (McKee, 2016; Tunali, 2017). Such was the case in Israel during the 2011 protest for social justice which was the first large-scale civil disobedience against the neo-liberalisation of the Israeli welfare state since the 1980s. Empty House is perhaps the strongest example discussed in this thesis when it comes to the correlation between the political and artistic crisis of representation. Yet, whether they were formed as art collectives before, during and after the emergence of the J14 movement, all the artists I interviewed have either mentioned their involvement in the protest camps, or the impact it has on the artistic and communal work.

Connecting the social and collaborative turn in Israeli art to the increasing effect of neo-liberal agenda on Israeli society, however, is not sufficient.

Alongside the rise of individualism, Israeli society is still largely defined and divided according to collective categories, such as ethnic, religious and national. The deepening of socio-economic gaps between the various groups in Israel increased the antagonistic struggle between them over the control of political, material and symbolic resources. Nonetheless, nationality remained the major form of identification. As a result, there is a large consensus over the ethno-national structure in Israel that grants collective privileges for the Jewish majority over the Palestinian-Arab population living in Israel and in the Palestinian Occupied Territories, and which often places other secondary forms of identification within a lower priority. In the second chapter I described the parallel process of fragmentation and nationalisation of the Israeli society using the 'four tribes' model outlined by Israeli president Rivlin that called for a collaborative dialogue between the different 'tribes' to find a shared sense of common. In relation to the social turn in Israeli art, I asked how socially engaged and collaborative art practices can formulate a critique on the current identity politics and ethno-national discourse in Israel?

Throughout the projects the art collectives in discussion have produced spaces that can be understood using Rancière's terms as democratic. They are democratic in the sense that they reconfigure the police order's hierarchical modes of identification and categorisation, and allow for the subjectivisation of the participants into something else than what they are usually defined by. I showed, for example, how a space such as *The Garden Library*, allowed for the labour and asylum seeker communities to perform a different type of political and artistic subjectivity which is not portrayed in the Israeli public discourse. Or how images of the foreign communities taking

part in cultivating the area of Levinsky Garden or the new CBS with the help of Arteam collective, produced a dissensus to the homogeneous economic and living models developed under the Israeli-Zionist ideology. Moreover, by looking at the way the asylum seekers struggle for recognition was connected to the struggle of south Tel Aviv senior residents during the 2011 protests, I emphasised the potential of a transnational and residential alliance in distributing the sensible order. This potential was largely due to a strong activist and radical activity that was undertaken in the area of South Tel Aviv with actors such as the Mirzahi feminist group ‘Achoti’ since the 2000s, and which made possible for transversal alliance, between ethnicity, nationality and classes, to occur.

These types of dissensual spaces suggest the promotion of a form of plural democracy which acknowledges differences and conflicts as essential components of democracy, as well as the struggle of marginal groups against inequality and exclusion. By comparing different types of aesthetic configurations that address this issue, I also pointed at the challenges of promoting this kind of democratic model under the current Israeli police order, where there is still an overall consensus amongst the Jewish population on its ethno-national qualities. This was mostly manifested through the conflict between Musrara residents and Muslala art collective discussed in the second chapter. Musrara residents objected to the kind of a bi-national festival that was organised by Muslala collective, and to the way the Palestinian history of the neighbourhood was part of the collective artistic work. Although emphasising the ethnic and cultural similarities between Mizrahi Jews and the Palestinian Arab who lived in adjacent locations, and

the shared history of discrimination under the Israeli police order, this type of collaboration was perceived by Musrara residents as a threat on the national Jewish identity, which in the end led to their withdrawal in the participation of the festival. The Musrara residents' rejection of the sensory experience produced by Muslala collective was explained using the concepts of affect and emotions. Looking at images and videos from the first event of *Between Green and Red* (2012) one can recognise the affective quality the music had on the participants when it came to the suspension of the everyday modes of identification and delimitation and brining religious and secular, Jews and Arab into a shared experience. Yet the transformative potential embedded within partaking in an unfamiliar and unordinary experience was blocked with the bodily encounter between Jewish women and Arab men during the dancing. This can be explained in terms of emotional response of fear or anxiety that reaffirms the police order's formation of boundaries and divisions. It also points to the fact that even when we accept identities to be fluid, relational and non-essential, it is difficult to overcome certain premises, sentiments and beliefs when they are confronted with a different distribution of the sensible, especially when it is perceived as foreign (for example, Muslala as an outsider art collective or the Palestinian as an ethno-national outsider).

5.2 Change

One of the frequent questions asked in relation to socially engaged and collaborative art practices is whether and how art can contribute to social change. As discussed above, this thesis emphasised the democratic and dissensual elements within the art collectives' works that posited a critique to

the national-neo-liberal police order and created alternative models for living within a heterogeneous and divided society. Notwithstanding the development of the art collectives themselves, this suggests a different interpretation for the question of change that relates to the way art is affected by its involvement with non-artistic terrains. This is something Rancière (2006, 2009) also argued in relation to the aesthetic regime of art when he acknowledged the constant negotiation of art with other sensory experiences and objects that are not perceived as art. In this thesis, I was interested in expanding the discussion on the in-between space that characterises the aesthetic regime of art. As mentioned in the introduction, Rancière's discussion on aesthetic art is still connected to the world of art museums, major galleries and biennales. Moreover, the duration of aesthetic art – meaning, the dissensual effect of a new aesthetic constellation within the representational regime of art – is always temporary. And while the art projects discussed in this thesis were also characterised by a relatively short duration of time (between a few days to a few years), the creative community and infrastructure formed around them have expanded. The latest projects of Empty House (*The Factory*) and Muslala (*The Terrace*) have become a hot spot for residents, tourists, artists, bee-keepers, gardeners, carpenters and performers which maintain a dynamic routine of art and other creative activities. For some of its members maintaining the space has become a full-time job in which bureaucracy, marketing and finance often take first priority. Followed by the 'NGOisation' of *The Garden Library*, the only Arteam's project, has expanded its educational and cultural programmes and become

the main community centre for the foreign communities living mostly in south Tel Aviv.

The fourth chapter outlined the numerous factors that affected the current changes seen within the art collectives and contributed to the expansion of the artistic margins or art's second economy in Israel. These changes can be understood in two main ways. The strengthening of what is described here as the creative class has raised the value of artists as entrepreneurs and social agents within the current neo-liberal economy. At the same time, the assemblages of multiple mass movements around the world created a bottom-up pressure for public and private bodies to be more attentive towards the protests' demands especially around issues of accessibility, accountability and governmentality. This has opened a new path for art collectives and other grassroots communal and activist groups to be more involved in processes of shaping the public sphere. The art and governmental institutions' 'discovery' of grassroots movements is often described in terms of institutionalisation and co-option and posits a dilemma for art workers and activists when it comes to the nature of this type of collaboration with the police order.

Using a transversal model, I argued that the constant negotiation of the art collectives with the representative bodies of the police order, such as municipal units, development and management companies, is necessary for the kind of extensive and structural changes in which some of the art collectives are interested. For example, Muslala and Onya's ecological approach towards art and place-making is used to promote a more sustainable modes of living in dense urban spaces that are going through

accelerated processes of redevelopment. Arteam's collaboration with the NPO Mesila was a reaction to the immediate welfare and political needs of the foreign communities and the asylum-seekers community. These types of collaboration with formal and non-artistic bodies were described as transversal institutionalisation since the spaces created by the art collectives as a result of this collaboration have maintained the heterogeneous, affective and even eruptive qualities. Understanding the need for stability, especially when new factors enter, such as growing older and having children, is also seen through the institutionalisation of the latest Empty House project. Since its opening in summer 2016, *The Factory* (Empty House) has become a standalone endeavour. *The Factory* can be understood in terms of transversality, especially through the ways its community reterritorialises older and current modes of labour production into a new aesthetic constellation that aims to sustain its artistic and economic needs.

There is one last thing to note here in regard to the issue of change that is concerned with the role of art collectives within the third or civic sector. This is something that was briefly mentioned in this thesis in relation to Muslala and Arteam who registered as NPOs in their early stages. Adopting the structure and management language of non-profit and non-governmental organisations by art collectives is another way from which to understand art's negotiation with other non-artistic sensory experiences. It can also be understood in relation to the significant expansion of the third or civic sector in Israel within the last three decades and which has gained an influential position in almost every area of life. The range of rules this sector takes upon itself as well as its multiple and plural characteristics encourages further

exploration onto the political and aesthetic potential this sector has on Israel's modes of governance.

5.3 Time-Space Relations

In this thesis I argued that the art projects in discussion are transversal. One of the reasons that is concerned with the art collectives' examination of new universes of references and values. Muslala for example was both inspired by and collaborated with former members of the Black Panthers movement; Empty House saw itself as part of a global community of squatters; and Onya and Arteam integrate the traditions as well as agricultural and craft techniques of the migrants and asylum seekers with whom they collaborated. I argued that the aesthetic assemblages produced in the art collectives' work cannot simply be understood using the dialectic model upon which the linear and Western-oriented Israeli art history is built. The model of transversality was used then to suggest a different type of relation between global/local, centre/periphery that derives its references and values from marginal traditions, voices and practices from around the world and within Israeli politics and culture. Instead of (only) looking at the Israeli art canon to understand the development of the current social turn, I used this opportunity to look at other possible paths which impacted the aesthetics of the art collectives, such as counter-theatre in Israel, ecological art, and Mizrahi feminist art. In addition, I emphasised the democratic potential of expanding the narratives of art and politics within an Israeli context, such as with the case of the *Black Panthers' Road* (Muslala) in the third chapter.

The Black Panthers' Road was chosen as a case study from which to examine the rhizome as an alternative system of thought to the dialectic model that characterises the representational regime of Israeli art. It suggested a language of heterogeneity making new connections between politics, space and artistic practice and assumed a position of multiplicity in relation to what and who considered to be local within the Israeli cultural and political landscape. By doing that *The Black Panthers' Road* became a dissensual space posited against the distribution of the sensible of the Israeli police order and its art institutions. It also highlighted how choosing a space, for example the public space of Musrara rather than conventional artistic spaces, affects the material and political conditions from which an artistic dissensus can emerge. Using the words of Rancière (2010: 136), the efficacy in producing a different sensory fabric "resides not in the model (or counter-model) of behaviour it provides [i.e. preaching to mimic the Black Panthers Movement way], but first and foremost in partition of space and time that it produces to define ways of being together". Within socially engaged and collaborative art literature, this argument resonates with Kester's (2011: 145) understanding of 'an epistemological critique' that scrutinises the relation between space ("what forms of knowledge are appropriated or necessary to a given site?") and the various mechanisms that can exercise power on it ("who is entitled to speak, or act, on behalf of this site, and who is subject to this authority?"). Furthermore, the chronological proximity of *The Black Panthers' Road* to the first J14 movement protest camps that were erected first in Tel Aviv and then all around the country, suggests a correlated crisis in the mechanism of representation and knowledge production both within the

aesthetic and the political regime. Understanding this correlation through a rhizomatic system of thought does not indicate a causative connection or a unified action that aim to solve this crisis on both fields. As I have shown in this thesis, there is still a level of artistic autonomy that exists within the work of the art collectives. Instead a rhizomatic system outlines the range of possibilities in which one can think of ways to produce new aesthetic communities and sensory realities. This is abundantly evident in the relationships between art, social movements, and protest that continue to motivate and enrich each other, even when the struggle appears to be over, tents have been dismantled, and people have returned to their homes.

5.3.1 What's next?

The art collectives' exploration of collective identities and the way they have come into being, emphasises the arbitrary and non-essentialist qualities of any distribution of the sensible. There is a scholarly value then in continuing this transversal exploration of art and politics in Israel. During the archive and fieldwork conducted for this thesis, I have gained knowledge and understanding on other socially engaged art practices in Israel beyond the scope of this thesis. Some of these practices were mentioned in the introduction and the third chapter, such as art collectives and alternative art spaces emerged in the geographical periphery and by under-represented groups within Israeli politics and art. While this thesis focused on art collectives that collaborated with marginalised communities, it paid less attention on the artistic and political contribution of art and activist practices that were initiated by the marginalised communities themselves. A transversal approach can be applied to further explore art practices located

on the geographical and cultural periphery in Israel, and therefore to contribute to the study on the expansion of the artistic margins that are located outside of the representational regime of Israeli art.

Adopting a transversal model can also be a way to expand the research on collaborative and socially engaged art in Israel from a broader historical perspective. This thesis briefly referred to other periods of political turbulences in Israel that have also influenced the emergence of collaborative and socially engaged art practices. Within the context of this research practices such as the counter theatre of the 1970s and the Mizrahi-feminist art exhibitions of Achoti movement, were mostly brought up as reference points that influenced the current 'social turn' within Israeli art. However, the different socio-political and artistic conditions from which they emerged requires a septate study that examines their artistic and political contribution. These periods include the 1970s – the emergence of Mizrahi protests movements and communal theatre and performance art; and the 2000s – new forms of artistic activism and collaborative art responding to the outburst of the Second Intifada and its effect on both Israeli and Palestinian society. Combining these two periods with the current decade of 'social turn' in art will provide a more comprehensive examination of the socio-political meanings of Israeli art, and the intersection of art, politics and activism. It will also expand the study on the artistic and political contribution of marginal groups, such as Palestinian and Mizrahim to the production of radical and autonomous art, activist and communal spaces. And lastly, expanding the study on art and politics from a transversal approach can be used to examine

the effectiveness of this model beyond the boundaries of the specific case studies of this thesis.

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Toward a Transversal Reading of Art and Politics in Israel

Abstract:

The 2011 Israeli protest for social justice marked a change in the responses of Israeli citizens to political and social matters. The ways in which art and social change intersected during the protest, and the emergence of art collectives following the events, call for an understanding of the relation between art and politics in Israel. This article suggests an alternative reading of socially engaged art in Israel. To this end, I use Félix Guattari's notion of 'transversality' and Jacques Rancière's theory on the 'aesthetic regime' to highlight significant periods where art and politics have intersected in ways that have challenged Israeli art historiography, often neutralizing the political within an artwork. By using a theoretical framework that emphasizes notions of hybridity and the blurring of boundaries, I make new connections between times, places, and practices that go beyond the binaries of center and periphery, mainstream and alternative, and aesthetics and politics.

7. Appendix:

“Toward a Transversal Reading of Art and Politics in Israel” (2018): an Article published in *Israel Studies Review* 33(2), pp.105-122.

Introduction

In 1992, Sarah Breitberg-Semel spoke of the inability of a political avant-garde to take root in Israel: “The political avant-garde [art] in the country has never been able to gain traction. Its principles, its political background, were not clear to the local art community and were distant from the problems that occupied this community. The ambition of bringing a political change through art, to use it as a ‘bullet’ ... was far away from the Israeli artist’s consciousness” (cited in Azoulay 1993: 11). As a curator at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art between 1977–1989 and an editor of *Studio* magazine between 1993–2003, Breitberg-Semel held a central role in defining the agenda of Israeli art, claiming that painting with modernist tendencies was the dominant style between the 1960s and 1980s. I first came across this quotation in an article by the curator and theorist Ariella Azoulay (1993). It appeared in issue 40 of *Studio*, which focused on performance and artistic interventions in public spaces in 1970s Israel. These practices were seen as an alternative voice responding to the instability of the decade, especially after the Yom Kippur War in 1973 (Barzel 1987; Omer 1998)—a period considered to be significant in the relationship between art and politics within

Israeli art. This issue of *Studio* magazine was the first attempt to bring these expressions to the center of Israeli art discourse, thus suggesting a counter-narrative to the mainstream story of Israeli art (Azoulay 1993).

Attempts to redefine relations and boundaries in Israeli art have increased since the 1990s. These efforts challenge the structure, politics, and content of Israeli art and criticize its dominant historiography by (1) showing that it tends to neutralize the political and the critical aspects of the art, focusing only on aesthetic analysis (Azoulay 1992); (2) demonstrating the way in which Israeli art discourse reinforces the national identity and becomes defined by it (Chinski 2015); and (3) arguing for the exclusion of other voices in Israeli art that do not coincide with secular and Western taste, such as non-Western Jewish traditions and Palestinian art (Harari 2015; Pedaya 2014; Sperber 2010). This article contributes to these attempts by suggesting an alternative reading of intersections between art and politics in Israel since the 1970s. The ideas primarily originate from an analysis of the 2011 Israeli social protest movement—also known as the J14 movement—and how these events have generated increased involvement of artists in collaborative, communal, and activist practices.

My research on contemporary art collectives is an opportunity to highlight other moments where art and politics have overlapped in Israel. It is also connected to global artistic tendencies such as participatory art, socially engaged art, community art, and public art (Bishop 2012; Bradley and Esche 2007; Thompson 2012). The theoretical framework that was developed to examine these practices will be employed here to locate intersections of art

and politics within a broader Israeli context. I will focus on Félix Guattari's (1995) notion of 'transversality' and Jacques Rancière's (2002) theory on the 'aesthetic regime'. Both transversality and the aesthetic regime emphasize the involvement of art with other terrains, such as the political. The premise that art is inseparable from politics—being part of the way in which the social order of a given time and place is perceived and structured—enables us to formulate a terminology to discuss the political avant-garde, which local art communities, as Breitberg-Semel noted, have not been able to capture (Azoulay 1993; see also Hinderliter et al. 2009).

Apart from highlighting marginal art practices, I will use the notion of transversality as a tool to critique the structure of the Israeli art discourse. Transversality is understood as diagonal lines that oppose both vertical structures (as in hierarchies) and horizontal structures (as in an organizational model of multiple centers), cutting between disciplines and other frameworks such as gender, race, class, and nationality (Palmer and Panayotov 2016; Raunig 2007). By adopting this dynamic, acentric, and cross-disciplinary approach, I will draw new connections between times, places, and practices. I will discuss three activities that I identify as transversal since they redefine notions of action, politics, engagement, and community from both artistic and activist perspectives: (1) performances of the counter-theater group Ohel Yosef in Jerusalem during the 1970s; (2) He'ara art events in Jerusalem and displays of Mizrahi feminist art in the 2000s; and (3) the emergence of art collectives as a result of the J14 movement in 2011.

On Art's Privilege and Responsibility: A Theoretical Framework

To incorporate an analysis that is aware of art's engagement with other discourses, as well as political concerns with visibility, I use both Guattari's notion of transversality and Rancière's aesthetic regime theory. Since the definition of transversality suggested by Guattari is broad and vague—generally understood as a "tool to open hitherto closed logics and hierarchies," "a line rather than a point," and "militant, social, undisciplined creativity" (Genosko 2014: 58, 81–82)—I focus on the way it is utilized in art theory.

Transversality is a key concept in the aesthetic paradigm that Guattari developed, where art becomes more involved in social life and creativity has 'contaminated' other paradigms such as the scientific and the ethical. Guattari's (1995: 101) most relevant argument on the aesthetic paradigm is that not only does it manage to influence other paradigms, but its power of feeling takes a "privileged position" in relation to other powers of enunciation, such as thinking (philosophy) and knowing (science). This argument resonates with Rancière's (2002: 137) theory on the aesthetic regime in which art is a privileged category in the sense that "[it] is art to the extent that it is something else than art." That is to say, art holds its own sensory system and at the same time poses a form of life. This approach of relating art with life can be used as a critique of art and as a critique on the fields that art permeates (Bishop 2012).

Within the context of this article, transversal reading on art and politics posits a critique on how art history has been written in Israel. According to the art historian Gideon Ofrat (2014), there have been at least 14 attempts at a historiography of Israeli art since 1939. In reading the summary, the historiographers' personal taste and bias is evident, resulting in a tendency to emphasize certain artists and trends while ignoring others (ibid.).

Dalia Manor (2005) also mentions this bias in her essay on common models within Israeli art historiography. She argues that most art writing focuses on certain theories or ideologies that dictate the choice of the case study, and that despite the pluralities of voices, from an early stage of writing on Israeli art, a consensual division of periods and trends has dominated the field. These divisions include the establishment of the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in 1906; modern trends that influenced artists living in Eretz Yisrael; integrated Israeli styles, such as the Canaanites and New Horizons; and the place of art in the building of the state. Writing on Israeli art also manifests a strong propensity for binarism, such as East-West, local-universal, Israeli-Jewish, and Tel Aviv-Jerusalem. This binarism is used to describe processes within Israeli art in relation to national identity and as a mode of criticism. By doing that, art critique, such as the type mentioned earlier, accepts the hegemonic model that exists and offers a critical gaze at it or an alternative history that complements it (ibid.; Ofrat 2014).

By adopting a transversal approach, I suggest a critical reading of art historiography that challenges its dualistic structure and offers a hybrid tone that favors a mix of languages, locations, and practices. Yet I do not aim to

present an alternative historiography of Israeli art. Transversality is a movement that refuses any linearity or centralized models that unify subjects, trends, and processes under a meta-narrative. Therefore, the case studies in this article are not considered as part of 'the salon of the refused' or as aiming to be part of the mainstream; instead, they are seen as offering an alternative and marginal voice. Each of them forms a different model of a sensory reality that is both autonomous and engaged with its environment.

This leads to the second aspect of art as a critique on other fields. Guattari's and Rancière's ideas on aesthetics are part of a theoretical and practical approach that deals with subjectivity, collectivity, and community. For Guattari (1995: 107), transversality is an essential movement within the aesthetic paradigm that "has ethico-political implications." It is connected to Guattari's (2014: 18) discussion on ecosophy, which suggests an integrated relationship between "the environment, social relations and human subjectivity." Guattari suggests ecosophy as a means for reinventing social practices and subjectivities with a sense of responsibility to current and future forms of life on the planet (ibid.). As a result, his perception of subjectivity is plural, multi-layered, and always in a process of becoming rather than being fixed. Transversality and the aesthetic paradigm are, therefore, used as part of the production of new subjectivities that Guattari (1995: 7) compares to an artist creating "new forms from the palette."

The political responsibility of aesthetics, especially the part that aesthetics play in organizing reality, is also central to Rancière's aesthetics theory. When it comes to the ways in which art can interfere with the order of things

—meaning that we perceive reality through sets of norms, laws, and actions —Rancière notes the potential for establishing an aesthetic community. Such a community is formed as individuals occupy a place and time through particular gestures, perceptions, and attitudes performed by the body. The aesthetic community is comprised of three tiers: the first is the utilization of forms, words, space, and rhythms to suggest a different sensory reality; the second forms a 'dissensual figure', in which the new form stages a conflictual relationship with the previous sensory reality; and the third is the assemblage of both realities that produce a new sense of community (Rancière 2011).

The understanding of aesthetics offered by Guattari and Rancière provides theoretical tools that allow us to analyze socially engaged art practices in Israel and to use it as an overall paradigm to explore the relationship between art and politics. Moreover, the way in which Guattari's and Rancière's theories correspond with other systems of knowledge and organizations supplies a framework to explore the ways in which the case studies form, through their practices, complicated statements on the individual and the collective subjects living in Israel. These statements refer to the way that different identities are divided in Israel, such as cleavages concerning social and political issues, class and ethnicity, and national identities.

I argue that transversality can be employed to overcome these divisions. To do this, I use the three characteristics for transversality proposed by art theorist Gerald Raunig. Based on the discontinuous, diagonal, and eruptive nature of transversality argued by Guattari, Raunig offers three criteria for the

analysis of transversal movements between art and revolutionary groups: transnationality, transectorality, and an acentric constellation (Raunig 2002; 2007: 205–206). These three characteristics emphasize the coming together of people from different national and professional backgrounds to protest issues not limited to one country or even to one social or ethnic group. The goal of their struggle is not to form or connect to a center, but rather to maintain these "lines of flight, ruptures, which continuously elude the systems of points and their coordinates" (Raunig 2007: 205). The collectives, organizations, and individuals temporarily collaborate and overlap under "a flowing political organization with an open end" (Raunig 2002) in order to prevent future forms of unified models and power apparatuses intended to replace the current ones.

Apart from these criteria, I suggest another characteristic for transversality: changeability. This is based on avant-garde theories that identify three types of criticism in avant-garde movements: social criticism, institutional criticism, and self-criticism (Bürger 1984; Rancière 2011; Raunig 2007). My argument is that self-criticism within a transversal context leads to essential changes that affect the activities or goals of transversal movements or groups as a result of external circumstances. These four criteria are used in this article to identify my case studies as transversal and to analyze their artistic activities.

The Summer of 2011 as a Transversal Landmark

Since 2011, an increasing number of art collectives have engaged in socially oriented practices in Israel. The large scale of this phenomenon suggests a 'social turn' within Israeli art. According to the art critic Claire Bishop (2012),

a ‘social turn’ is the attempt to think of art collectively, and she views this attempt as “synonymous with political upheaval and movements for social change” (ibid.: 3). This use of art links social developments to historical moments, making revolution possible, even if this potential is not fulfilled. A recent example of a moment that acted as a catalyst for such a turn in the art world was the culmination of various insurrections in 2011. These include the Arab Spring, the 15-M movement in Spain, the J14 movement in Israel, the anti-austerity movement in Greece, and the Occupy movement in the US.

In Israel, J14 started as a protest camp during the summer of 2011 in Tel Aviv. Beginning as a demonstration against the housing shortage, it soon turned into a general struggle around the country over the effects of neo-liberal agendas implemented during the previous three decades, which have led to the deterioration of the welfare state model. This conflict is already marked in the Israeli-Jewish collective memory as a moment of empowerment and new opportunities for citizens to respond to social injustices in Israel (Livio and Katriel 2014; Monterescu and Shaindlinger 2013).

Despite the flourishing research on J14, only minor attention has been paid to the aesthetics of the protest. An aesthetic reading focuses on the visual landscape that has helped to shape an alternative language for talking about and taking political action (Feigenbaum et al. 2013). It is not just an exploration of the decorative aspect of the protest that gives visibility to the protesters’ demands; it is also about the transformation of public space into a theatrical and performative arena where “individuals voluntarily and playfully

enter a space where traditional social relationships and hierarchies are temporarily suspended and replaced by the unity and heightened emotionality of shared purpose and solidarity" (Livio and Katriel 2014: 148–149). This creation of space that is both apart from and connected to the surroundings that made it possible is what forms, according to Rancière (2011), an aesthetic community.

The idea of an aesthetic community can be interpreted differently in the context of the J14 movement. Despite the uniform image of young, middle-class, Ashkenazi Israelis that has been used by the media to frame the protest, J14 consisted of a multiplicity of voices and interactive spaces (Handel et al. 2012). Likewise, other models of sensory realities emerged, different from the mainstream camp erected on Rothschild Boulevard in the center of Tel Aviv. One of these was the protest camp in south Tel Aviv. This consisted of a variety of area residents, including homeless people, asylum seekers, residents under threat of eviction from their public housing apartments, sex workers, and drug addicts. In ethnically mixed areas, such as Jaffa and Haifa, the protest camps included both Israeli Jews and Palestinians, which led to political discussions that were often ignored in the mainstream protest camp. Lastly, in peripheral areas, such as the camp and demonstrations in Be'ersheva, protesters highlighted the government's apathetic attitude toward Israel's periphery and the lack of proper budgeting in comparison with other areas in Israel (ibid.; see also Misgav 2013).

Another aspect that allows us to understand unique features of the J14 movement, especially in relation to other civil struggles in Israel, is the way it

acted as a transversal moment. The mix of protesters from different national, class, and professional backgrounds expresses the transnationality and transectorality of the protest. The acentric model of the J14 protest is part of a larger global movement formed through the logic of networking and aggregation, which are based on interpersonal communication and distribution via social media (Misgav 2013). However, I argue that the importance of the protest as a transnational, transectoral, and acentric movement is evident only when taking into consideration the communal, artistic, activist, educational, and parliamentary platforms that have continued to develop after the protest subsided. Focusing on artistic practices during the summer of 2011 and afterward, we can see the ways in which artist groups and collectives provided an aesthetic interpretation for many of the issues raised during the protest.

Bait Reik (Empty House) is an example of a collective that emerged from J14. It aimed to transform the housing shortage problem into a cultural problem by squatting in abandoned buildings in Jerusalem and transforming them into temporary artistic homes for a new creative community in the city. It joins other groups that have been active in Jerusalem since the 2000s, such as Sala-Manca, which produces platforms for experimental art; the Muslala group, which worked collaboratively with the residents of the Musrara neighborhood; and HaMabul (The Great Flood) collective, which promotes socially engaged projects and interventions in the city.

A group that came together in 2014 is the Onya collective, which works mostly in the now permanently closed entrance of the old Tel Aviv bus

station, offering green solutions to environmental problems in the neighborhood. It joins the Garden Library in Levinsky Park in south Tel Aviv, which was established in 2009 by the art group ARTEAM, offering educational and cultural solutions for asylum seekers living in the area. Other artistic platforms that emerged in 2014 are Katamona, which created an open gallery and library in the Katamonim neighborhood in Jerusalem, and Forum 2014, based in Haifa, which solicits activists and artists living in the city to suggest alternative urban plans that will benefit the residents.

This is a partial list of the ongoing collective and socially engaged art practices happening in Israel over the last decade. While these groups do not necessarily share similar working methods and agendas, the list gives a sense of the size of this phenomenon and therefore the need to understand it. This is where transversality becomes helpful again, allowing us to search for other reference points that can be understood as sources of inspiration. I present here two other transversal periods—the 1970s and the 2000s—that are related to the latest moment of intersections following the 2011 Israeli social protest movement.

1971–1979: Counter-Theater in Jerusalem

This article began with a reference to issue 40 of *Studio* magazine, which was devoted to performances and art interventions during the 1970s. It highlighted alternative artistic styles in Israeli art and posited a critical approach to art institutions and historiography. Apart from the *Studio* discussion on art in the 1970s, there were other attempts to bring these art practices into a central place. One of these is seen in two exhibitions from

1998: *The Eyes of the State: Visual Art in a Country without Boundaries* and *Tikkun*, curated by Ellen Ginton and Mordechai Omer in Tel Aviv. Both focused on the political aspect of Israeli art and the adoption of experimental art forms (Omer 1998). A second attempt was the exhibition *Instruction Manual*, curated by Udi Edelman in the summer of 2017, at the Israeli Center for Digital Art in Holon. The main aims of this center (located in a suburb in central Israel) are to emphasize public and communal art practice and to develop alternative art models that are involved with social and political reality. As a result, *Instruction Manual* was not just a review of a certain period, theme, or practice; it was an effort to locate this decade and its artists in a canonical position as the forebears of contemporary artists' actions in the public space (Edelman 2017).

Similarly, I want to suggest another anchor group whose actions give insight into current socially and politically engaged art practices. I refer here to the counter-theater that was established in neighborhoods in Jerusalem in the 1970s, and I will focus on the theater group Ohel Yosef (Joseph's Tent) in Katamonim. The term 'counter-theater' was used by Shulamith Lev-Aladgem (2007) to describe a specific community-based theater in Jerusalem neighborhoods during the 1970s. Community-based theater is understood to be a creative practice that involves practitioners from different social statuses that use theater as a tool for empowerment and expression of life experiences that do not receive attention in the dominant cultural field. Lev-Aladgem offers the term 'counter' since the theater created in Jerusalem during this period contained a revolutionary element that could potentially

threaten social structures. Its power derived from being anti-institutional and coming from ‘below’, via marginal, oppressed groups (ibid.).

Counter-theater followed the activities of the Israeli Black Panthers movement, which was founded in 1971 in Jerusalem’s Musrara neighborhood by second-generation Jewish immigrants from Middle Eastern and North African countries. The socio-ethnic struggle initiated by the Black Panthers was expanded to the cultural field through the Ohel Yosef group in 1972, which eventually established a new social movement, the Tents movement, which was active in 1975–1979 and offered a different model for social struggle that was community based.

Some of the youths who participated in Ohel Yosef, such as Shlomo Vazana, Yemin Messika, and Eli Hamo, have continued their creative and activist work as adults, having been exposed to different experiences and sources of inspiration that shaped their political and artistic consciousness. Apart from growing up in the slums of Jerusalem, they took part in the Black Panthers demonstrations in 1971–1972. Another factor was the presence of volunteer students from North and South America and from the Israeli Communist organization Matzpen. Working in Jerusalem neighborhoods, these youths discussed Marxism, the African-American struggle, and the civil rights movement (Lev-Aladgem 2007; Shalom-Chetrit 2004). Here we can point to the transnational and transectoral aspects that helped to shape Ohel Yosef. Lastly, a key factor was Arieh Itzhak, a charismatic man involved in theater who studied outside Israel and whose efforts were inspired by the idea of integrating art and social awareness. When he returned to Israel, Itzhak

started creating community-based theater with young people, first from the Hatikva neighborhood in south Tel Aviv, and then in Katamonim in Jerusalem (Lev-Aladgem 2007).

The group called itself Ohel Yosef after its first play, *Joseph Goes Down to Katamon*, which was produced in Jerusalems's Khan Theater. The play is based on the biblical story of Joseph's dreams and his relationship with his brothers. It tells the story of a boy called Joseph (played by Messika) from Katamonim who dreams about his future, for which he is punished. The play was critically acclaimed, but it received negative responses from audiences because of its message highlighting discrimination and due to a scene in which Joseph is raped while in prison. Objections from audience members and city council representatives put pressure on Itzhak, the play's director, over the rape scene, and he consequently altered the play. Shortly afterward he decided to leave the group (Lev-Aladgem 2007).

I consider Ohel Yosef an essential moment in the transversal understanding of art and politics in Israel for three reasons. First, canonical art history, especially that of the twentieth century, which views abstract painting or ready-made objects as avant-garde forms of modern art, is not sufficient for understanding key themes and modes of expression in socially engaged art. The latter emphasizes the ephemeral moment, an engagement with an audience whose members have become full or partial collaborators, as well as the search for "artistic equivalents for political positions" (Bishop 2012: 3). Thus, forms of expression that explore these issues, such as performance

and theater, become more relevant, especially when discussing the revolutionary potential of art (Rancière 2011).

Another reason Ohel Yosef is essential for understanding art and politics in Israel is that its example provides a unique and unprecedented moment of transversality in Israel. That is, it offers a full correlation between art, politics, and protest. After Itzhak left, the theater group expanded its communal and activist involvement. Alongside the staging of other plays that were directed by Vazana, the group invaded public shelters and transformed them into youth clubs. In 1973, Ohel Yosef became a voluntary association in order to raise money for other communal services for the neighborhood, such as a bakery, laundromat, nursery, and embroidery and sewing factory. Eventually, Ohel Yosef's model was adopted in other neighborhoods in Jerusalem, although without the theatrical aspect. This led to the formation of the Tents movement three years later (Lev-Aladgem 2007; Shalom-Chetrit 2004). The timing of the expansion of Ohel Yosef's activities to include communal work, which took place after the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, was crucial.

Similar to the Black Panthers, Ohel Yosef insisted on raising the flag of social issues when the political situation was highly unstable and the government had withdrawn from addressing socio-economic problems (Shalom-Chetrit and Hamo 2003). Ohel Yosef was able to connect the artistic, the social, and the political by developing a new model of autonomous and communal leadership. What is more, the infrastructure initiated by Ohel Yosef influenced the development of other social movements, mostly in relation to housing

shortages, such as those that arose in the summers of 1990 and 2011 (Lev-Aladgem 2007; Misgav 2013).

The third reason for my view regarding the importance of Ohel Yosef relates to how the social awakening of Mizrahi youth in the neighborhoods of Jerusalem during the 1970s has become a source of inspiration for certain contemporary art collectives. In July 2011, the Muslala group inaugurated The Black Panthers Road in the Musrara neighborhood to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the movement. The road runs between streets and alleys in Musrara, including an alley that was later renamed They Are Not Nice, paraphrasing former Prime Minister Golda Meir's famous declaration regarding the Black Panthers. In Katamonim in December 2014, the group Katamona organized a tour with Vazana, who talked about theater, protest, and the Ohel Yosef group. A few months earlier, when launching its new space in the neighborhood, Katamona presented images from Ohel Yosef's plays in an outdoor exhibition.

2000–2007: He'ara art Events in Jerusalem and the Achoti Movement

In 2008, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem presented the exhibition *Real Time: Art in Israel 1998–2008*, curated by Amitai Mendelsohn and Efrat Natan. It was part of a series of cultural events marking Israel's sixtieth anniversary, where each major museum presented an exhibition devoted to art created in each decade since the establishment of the state. *Real Time* mapped the main trends within Israeli art, focusing on artists with national and international recognition. Analyzing the artworks and exhibition catalog,

Vivianne Barsky (2011: 26) emphasizes the gap between the decade's overwhelming events (such as the Second Intifada, the Second Gulf War, and the Second Lebanon War) and the "paradoxical apathy" and "emotional blunting" in the reaction of Israeli citizens. This observation is present in the catalogue text written by Mendelsohn (2008: 26) where he argues that the "leading young artists" express a sense of powerlessness and despair, especially after the failure of the Camp David peace summit and the beginning of the Second Intifada in 2000. Mendelsohn argues that this despair took the form of adopting "a universal stance in an attempt to rise above the purely local" (ibid.). Yet activist and socially engaged art receives only a minor mention in a footnote (Barsky 2011: 27; Mendelssohn 2008).

He'arat Shulayim (Footnote) was the name of an independent art journal published between 2001–2007 in Jerusalem by the art duo and life partners Lea Mauas and Diego Rotman, whose group is known as Sala-Manca. The journal published works by artists who experimented with multidisciplinary techniques in photography, video, performance, theater, text, and installation. A significant portion of the work involved a reaction to the political situation, particularly responses to the Second Intifada (Sala-Manca 2011). Publication of the journal was combined with a series of art events organized by Sala-Manca, which was called He'ara (Comment), emphasizing artistic interventions in the public space. Both these events and the journal took a critical stance toward the artistic mainstream in Israel by producing and showing works that were not part of conventional artistic trends, and by choosing the public space of Jerusalem in which to work rather than Tel Aviv,

the ‘official’ art center of Israel. In addition, their events commented on the political situation following the suicide attacks during this period that disturbed the city’s routine and led to feelings of fear and despair in Jerusalem (ibid.).

The integrated model of art and politics presented by Sala-Manca represents an avant-garde movement. For its first He’ara event in November 2001, Sala-Manca performed a project titled “Potemkin Village: A Re-enactment of a Show That Never Took Place,” which was based on the writings of the Portuguese poet and artist João Delgado. During the performance, Mauas declared that “the big theaters are afraid to tell the truth at the risk of losing the audience. Here, with our small crowd, there is nothing to be afraid of. There is no rule, only poetry.” (Sala-Manca 2014).

He’ara events and the *He’arat Shulayim* magazine produced three types of criticism that connect them to avant-garde movements and theories: social criticism, institutional criticism, and self-criticism (Bürger 1984; Raunig 2007). Another element that tightens Sala-Manca’s institutional criticism is the creation of an independent artistic platform that refrains from seeking state funding or commercial sponsors. Thus, the group is able to maintain artistic and curatorial freedom while raising money in other ways, for example, by selling copies of the journal. In doing so, its members produce an aesthetic community that locates itself between two identifying characteristics: existing ‘apart’ from society by creating a ‘small crowd’ of participants, while at the same time existing ‘together’, connecting the community to a future they can imagine without restraint (Rancière 2011).

It is interesting to consider the He'ara and Ohel Yosef groups in relation to avant-garde art and radicalism. After six years of operation during which they produced 11 He'ara events and published nine issues of *He'arat Shulayim*, and having realized that most of their participating artists had left the city, Sala-Manca (2014) decided to instead begin developing a more stable, ongoing platform for artists in Jerusalem. In the works of both Sala-Manca and Ohel Yosef, radical and subversive activities have given way to a more sustainable and communal model. In her analysis of participatory art, Bishop (2012) argues that socially engaged practices often neutralize aesthetic values, such as disruption and dissensus, as they strive to become more communal and ethical. However, seeing these practices as active within both the aesthetic field and the social field, I argue that this transformation is part of the groups' self-criticism, which is essential to transversality.

My last case study is the Mizrahi feminist movement Achoti (My Sister), established in 2000. It emerged out of the difficult socio-economic situation at that time, which especially affected women from marginal socio-ethnic groups (Misgav 2015). The timing of the establishment of the Achoti movement coincided with the failure of the Camp David peace summit and the beginning of the Second Intifada in 2000. This holds a clear resonance with the 'raising both flags' approach first utilized by the Black Panthers and Ohel Yosef. Yet rather than a mere protest, it shows the connection between the political situation and the deterioration of socio-economic stability in Israel (DeMalach 2009; Shalom-Chetrit 2004). Achoti managed to combine the political with the social by creating a transversal model that connected

the struggle of oppressed women in Israel from all ethnic and social backgrounds—Mizrahi, Ethiopian Jews, Palestinians, Bedouins, Russian Jews, work migrants, and asylum seekers. It offered a platform where multiplicity and hybridity within Israeli society were empowering tools to fight against the socio-economic and political hegemony that often uses a 'divide and conquer' strategy to maintain the power structure (Misgav 2015).

The first activity initiated by Achoti was an art exhibition titled *Sister: Mizrahi Women Artists in Israel*, which took place in the Jerusalem Artists House in February 2000, curated by Rita Mendes-Flohr and by the artist and director of the Achoti movement, Shula Keshet. The exhibition depicted works by Mizrahi women artists that reinforced the meaning of Mizrahi and feminist identity. According to Keshet (2005: 235), the exhibition expressed a "collective project of women who share a common identity and struggle." It was the first collective effort to provide a space for Mizrahi feminist art to respond to the Eurocentric and masculine-oriented status of Israeli art and society by using the artists' personal experiences (ibid.).

Choosing to curate an exhibition as the first project of a socio-political movement highlighted the battle over visibility as a central part of politics. However, the goal is not merely making things visible, but enabling this mode of expression to change the way visitors see the order of things (Faulkner 2014; Kester 2011). In the words of the exhibition catalog, it is "not simply aimed at getting a greater piece of the pie for a particular social segment, rather, it implies the rewriting of the basic assumptions of an entire society" (Keshet and Mendes-Flohr 2000).

Another aspect that connects Achoti to transversality is its diverse models of operation. Achoti is active in four centers around Israel: Achoti House in the Neve Sha'anan neighborhood in south Tel Aviv, the Ahata (My Sister, in Amharic) embroidery center in Kiryat Gat in the south, a space in Jerusalem, and a fair trade store in Tel Aviv City Center. The decision to locate the Achoti House, which focuses on artistic, educational, and communal activity, in south Tel Aviv—an area that has been dealing with ongoing neglect, ecological problems, and a large population of asylum seekers who lack formal recognition as refugees—resembles similar examples mentioned in this article where art and other cultural practices are produced from within the heart of a neighborhood. First, many of the participants and activists of the movement, such as Keshet, are local residents and therefore have personal experience in dealing with the challenges of the area. Second, the design of Achoti House, which is a shop with a big display window, café area, and library, provides a daily encounter between the interior of the house and the street and neighborhood outside, encouraging others to take part in the House's events (Misgav 2015).

In addition to their permanent spaces, Achoti also participates in acentric "lines of flows [and] ruptures" (Raunig 2007: 205), such as the protest camp erected in south Tel Aviv during J14. The camp was initiated by the Achoti movement 10 days after the beginning of the social protest on 14 January. From its beginning, Achoti positioned itself as the radical and non conformist camp, as opposed to the bourgeois middle-class camp on Rothschild Boulevard. Its radicalism—the camps' potential to threaten the power

structures of Israeli society—was competently expressed through its relationship with authorities. Achoti can be interpreted as transversal due to its inclusion of different socio-ethnic-national struggles led by people from different locations, including Mizrahi women, LGBTQ activists, and asylum seekers.

While Achoti's mainstream camp in Tel Aviv was recognized as a legitimate protest by the city council and the police, its camp in south Tel Aviv was evacuated and re-erected several times (Misgav 2015). The sensory reality of the camp was essentially different from that of the Rothschild Boulevard camp. According to Oren Livio and Tamar Katriel (2014), who analyzed the semiotic language of the Rothschild Boulevard camp, the aesthetics of the mainstream camp were expressed by humor and frivolity. It drew its visual vocabulary from idioms, puns, and references to Israeli-Zionist culture that determined who was allowed to be part of the protest, based on an understanding of shared experiences and cultural signifiers (ibid.). By contrast, the camp in south Tel Aviv managed to create, through circles of discussions, debates, and negotiations, a 'third space' (Rutherford 1990), holding within itself the different cultural histories, interests, ethnicities, and sexual orientations of the participants. Manifestations of this are seen, for example, in the mixing of Mizrahi, Ethiopian, and Nepalese music; African drum circles; signs written in Hebrew, Arabic, Russian, and Amharic; a vegan kitchen; a drag show and the raising of the Pride flag; and screenings and prose readings reflecting the social and cultural agenda of the camp (Misgav 2015). The spread of the Achoti movement throughout different fields,

locations, and struggles has allowed it to maintain its revolutionary potential long after the last camps of J14 were dismantled.

In the Midst of the Social Turn

This article began with a quote that expressed the inability of Israeli art discourse to understand and include art practices that overlapped withsocial and political protest. It has suggested that a transversal reading can overcome the dialectic structure of this art discourse and provide a useful theoretical toolbox to investigate the relationship between art and politics. Transversality is used as a critique of both current art and the political system. It suggests a way to go beyond seemingly binary categories by arguing in favor of a multiplicity of voices, identities, locations, and practices. The case studies in this article show the mix of traditional, new, local, and global languages and the expansion of margins that challenges mainstream and alternative definitions by suggesting new spaces for communal and radical art.

In relation to the discussion of art's potential to initiate socio-political change, the case studies present a different interpretation for change that has to do with the ability to engage in self-criticism, alongside social and institutional criticism. Each of the case studies produces a sensory reality that challenges the premises of Israeli art and Israeli hegemonic definitions regarding relationships between center-periphery and universal-local. The significance of the case studies lies within the fact that they provide a constant navigation between different fields, practices, and locations, constituting new aesthetic spaces to think and create differently.

These qualities of dynamism and movement, I argue, are important characteristics of contemporary avant-garde art. While the spaces created by the case studies maintain some form of avant-garde autonomy, their transversal intersections allow for a range of possibilities in which one can think of ways to produce new aesthetic communities and sensory realities. This is abundantly evident in the relationships between art, social movements, and protest that continue to motivate and enrich each other, even when the struggle appears to be over, tents have been dismantled, and people have returned to their homes.

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